The HUDSON REVIEW

James Joyce: A Memoir
STANISLAUS JOYCE

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WILLIAM EMPSON

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Poetry: BARBARA GIBBS, W. S. MERWIN

DeMille's Folk Epic: GEORGE BARBAROW

Reviews: ANATOLE BROYARD, WILLIAM TROY, VERNON YOUNG

VOLUME II, NUMBER 4 • WINTER, 1950

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NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

STANISLAUS JOYCE, who lives in Trieste, is writing a book on James Joyce for New Directions.

SUSANNE K. LANGER, author of *Philosophy in a New Key*, is at work on a sequel dealing with the arts.

W. S. MERWIN, a frequent contributor to these pages, is now living in Portugal.

WILLIAM EMPSON, when last heard from, was teaching at Peking National University.

BARBARA GIBBS teaches poetry at Bennington College.

NORTHROP FRYE'S *Fearful Symmetry. A Study of William Blake* was published in 1947.

STANLEY EDGAR HYMAN, author of *The Armed Vision*, lives in Westport, Connecticut.

R. W. B. LEWIS teaches at Bennington College.

WILLIAM TROY is preparing an essay on Melville's *Billy Budd* for this review.

ANATOLE BROYARD is a young writer living in New York City.

VERNON YOUNG, whose study of Joseph Conrad appeared in the Spring 1949 issue, is writing a book on the same author.

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THE HUDSON REVIEW

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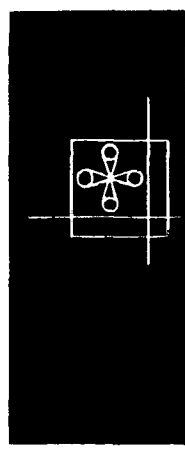

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James Joyce: A Memoir

STANISLAUS JOYCE

[EDITORS' NOTE:—*The memoir that follows, now available for the first time in English, appeared originally in the Florentine quarterly* Letteratura *in the issues for July-September and October-December, 1941—a few months after the death of James Joyce. While disagreeing with many of the author's individual opinions and judgments, we believe that this is a document of considerable importance for the light it casts on Joyce's life, on his relationships with some of his contemporaries, and, by implication, on his work. We shall welcome comments on this score from those of our readers who have a special interest in Joyce. The translation from the Italian has been revised and brought up to date by the author.*]

IN COMMEMORATING a writer who happens to have been my own brother, I am courting either of two dangers: of log-rolling for the family if I praise; or of playing the part of Cain if I criticize and call a spade a spade. In this brief record I shall find myself obliged to recount a number of things not pleasant to tell; but it was from my brother himself that I learned the obligation of plain speaking. Having been with him in his formative years at home, in school, at the university; and, later, through the years of his struggle to get a hearing in Dublin and Trieste, I hope to be able, thanks to this long period of shared life, to compensate by the intrinsic interest of the subject for the shortcomings in expression inevitable when one attempts to set down one's recollections in a foreign language.

The Joyces are an old Irish family; the mountainous region of Galway between the beautiful lakes of Mask and Corrib is called the Joyces' country. The names of James Joyce's grandparents and great-grandparents are all Irish names. The Joyces are, moreover, a Catholic family, which counts or counted a number of

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priests and nuns among its members dead or living. I say as much to forestall those who would deny to Joyce—all of whose books, aside from his poems, are banned in Ireland—the right to speak in the name of his people.

James Joyce was born of lower middle-class Dublin people. His father, a minor civil servant and landlord in a small way, had at one time studied medicine at the University of Cork. This is only to say that for three years he was officially registered at the Faculty of Medicine. He studied as little as possible and distinguished himself, instead, in sports and dramatics—and by his wild student's life. After his father died and after he himself had become involved in one of the many Fenian movements, he was hustled off to Dublin by his mother, who was eager to get him out of such a dangerous environment—with the result that he saved a great many human lives by abandoning the study of medicine and accepting a well-paid post in the English Government. The only son of an only son, he was, on that account no doubt, of spoiled and intolerant character. To his older son James he bequeathed the latter trait, which in the writer as a young man took the form of a certain arrogance in literary matters and a contemptuous unwillingness to put up with mediocrity. From his father who, as a student, had been one of the leading dramatic lights at the University of Cork, James also inherited acting ability and a beautiful tenor voice, but not, unfortunately, his father's iron constitution which had been proof against every abuse.

The poet grew up amidst the progressive disintegration of the large family, a disintegration due to paternal intemperance which reached its climax when Joyce, with his bachelor's degree in Letters, stood on the threshold of his literary career. At school he distinguished himself regularly in the state examinations, which were identical for all students in secondary schools of Ireland. Every year and with no great effort he won bursaries; and twice, in the higher forms, he won the blue ribbon, the prize for an English composition. It is generally held that state prizes never go to the deserving. In this case, at least, the examiners swiftly and surely singled out a conspicuous literary talent. He had already

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made his début as an author at the age of nine by having a short poem printed on the occasion of the death of Parnell, the leader of the Irish National Party. It was the expression in verse of those political resentments which were the subject of his father's interminable nightly monologues. The poem, infantile in its imitation of Byron—that eternal idol of the young—was greatly admired by friends of the family, who, in literary matters at any rate, were of an ingenuousness no less infantile. Later, in his favorite of the stories from *Dubliners*, Joyce was to mock himself in a poem on the same subject and in almost the same style, but introduced—as Padraic Colum observes in his preface to the American edition—in such a way that, despite the hackneyed phraseology and the tricked-up literary graces of a semi-illiterate poet, real sorrow is discernible, and loyalty to the departed chieftain.

Joyce was educated from the very outset by Jesuits. Due to his precocity he was admitted to Clongowes Wood College when barely turned six, though the minimum age requirement was nine. He remained with the Jesuits until he received his degree in Letters at the Royal University of Ireland, where he attended the Jesuit University College of Stephen's Green. The Jesuits enjoy the reputation of being good educators and no doubt they are; but entrusting impressionable boys to them in a country so Catholic as Ireland is not unattended by certain dangers. It is by no means a rare occasion that, taking advantage of the religious sensibility of adolescents, they try to persuade boys from rich or influential families, or those of superior intelligence, to join their order. As a child Joyce was very religious, and overcome by remorse for certain boyish transgressions, he went through a critical period of repentance. His teachers, observing the zeal with which he discharged his religious duties, made a downright attempt to entice him into their ranks, even interesting the Provincial of the Irish Jesuits in his case. And they came within an ace of succeeding.

The story of the development of an artist is in great measure the story of his early reading. A caustic critic, unsparing in his attacks on whatever he held to be mediocre in literature, Joyce was generous, coherent, and tenacious in his enthusiasms as in his

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ideas—and these enthusiasms were always spontaneous, independent of national currents or mere culture-shopping. In his first poems he imitated Byron, but soon the spirituality and rebellious personality of Shelley made a deeper impression on him. Among prose writers, he admired Newman above all and knew by heart long passages of his limpid classical prose. Joyce, who had disdainfully turned his back upon Catholicism, found strange points of contact with the famous convert, and considered well founded Newman's criticism, which charged English liberalism with being a composite of intellectual nebulosity and indifferentism. Next, he was drawn to Blake's mysticism. But the first reading to leave upon his mind a mark as deep as that left upon him by his religious crisis was that of the *Divine Comedy*. In the inevitable comparison of Dante with Milton, he dealt so contemptuously with the Puritan poet that the prejudices of his teachers were as offended as if he had attacked them personally. He placed Dante above Shakespeare himself—another heresy—a fact, however, which did not prevent Thomas Arnold, Matthew Arnold's brother and Professor of English Literature at the University, from praising an essay in which the student Joyce vigorously attacked *Macbeth*. He admired D'Annunzio, so much so that he slipped off to London to hear La Duse in *La Gioconda* and *La Città Morta*. Before returning to Dublin he dedicated a poem to Eleonora Duse and sent it to her without troubling to find out whether she knew English. Later, at Trieste, he broke a lance for *Il Fuoco*, asserting the inalienable right of the artist to use as material for his art his own life and the lives of those about him, regardless of persons and of the claims of human respect.

He contributed to the University review an article on Mangan, an unlucky and neglected Irish poet of the beginning of the last century; it was a short, highly mannered essay, betraying D'Annunzio's influence. Of the modern Irish poets he esteemed only Yeats. At that time Yeats was arousing great antipathy in Dublin, partly on account of his mystical neo-paganism which despite its Celtic origins was unacceptable to the good Dublin Catholics; and partly because, by turning his tall, slender, dark-

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complexioned person to advantage, he gave the appearance of deliberately dressing the part of a poet. Poseur was what they called him. When, at its first performance, that surpassingly beautiful verse drama, *The Countess Cathleen,* ended amidst a tumult of whistles and jeers, the Catholic students prepared a protest against it to be inserted in the leading Dublin newspapers. The play, they said, was anti-religious, anti-national, and a libel on that holy thing, Irish womanhood. Joyce was a minority of one in refusing to sign the protest, and he had many lively discussions with the other students in the halls of the University, returning calm, ironical answers to his angrier critics. In a more formal vein, he answered the attacks of the students in an article, "The Day of the Rabblement," which he sent to the University review. It was flatly rejected and Joyce had it printed and distributed among all the literary personalities resident in Dublin. In it he accused the Irish Literary Theater of cowardice and of submission to certain hidden but well-known forces; and he let it be understood, without false modesty, that the task of carrying forward the flaming torch of art was reserved for him, not for the Irish Theater. Whenever he was caught up by an enthusiasm for some writer or work, he gave himself no peace until he had found someone to share it. For the most part I served; but often he changed victims in rather a strange way. Once, for example, he was seized by a bizarre impulse to accost a Capuchin who was taking a walk one summer afternoon along that beach near Dublin named, because of the incessant roar of the surf, the Bull. After several minutes of conversation, Joyce read a story of Yeats, *The Adoration of the Magi,* to the good-natured monk. The solitude, the sun, the distant roar of the waves dashing against the sands, must have disposed the Capuchin to tolerance toward a heretic's novella on a sacred subject, for he murmured, "Very beautiful, very beautiful."

Ibsen's dramas exerted the most powerful influence on Joyce's development. In 1900, when he was eighteen and in his first year at the University, he published in the *Fortnightly Review*—then the foremost English review—an essay on the great Norwegian's

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last play, *When We Dead Awaken.* Through his English translator, William Archer, Ibsen sent Joyce his thanks for the sympathetic article, which, he said, he had read with the aid of a dictionary. Joyce, to whom languages came easily, had already embarked on the study of Danish for the purpose of reading in the original those works of Ibsen which had not yet been translated. His ambition at that period was to become a dramatist. He read a paper before the University Debating Society on "The Drama and Life," and in the debate which followed, he spoke so ardently of Ibsen that one of the professors believed himself obliged to follow up with a public lecture on the Norwegian, for which he got the necessary books and documentation from Joyce.

After Joyce received his degree in Letters, he was offered a post as assistant professor at the University College of Stephen's Green—an offer which he turned down in order not to be dependent on the Jesuits. It was his second rejection of their blandishments. They took it as defiance, which indeed it was. Jesuits have a long memory. The reason why, many years later, Joyce's first book, *Dubliners,* was banned and a thousand copies burned, has remained a mystery. Padraic Colum attributes it either to the personal prejudices of the printer—in this case an old Dublin firm which did considerable work for the English Government in Ireland—or to the meddling of Freemasonry. But neither the printer nor Freemasonry had displayed the power to keep the publisher in question from putting out a whole series of publications marked by a growing freedom of expression and profound hostility to everything English. The publisher himself told Joyce that a kind of vigilance committee was responsible. This committee was, it is true, presided over by the Vicereine, but it is also true that the Jesuits were well represented on it both directly and indirectly. This vigilance committee (the Censorship Board) exists to this day (1941), carrying on under cover, more powerful than ever, and in the hands of the same people—though the Vicereine and Freemasonry are no more. If Padraic Colum is disposed to lay the blame on the English authorities, that fact is probably owing to his desire to flatter the susceptibilities of Irish-

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American Catholics, who wield great influence in journalistic circles, and who join to the methods of Tammany Hall that ignorant bigotry which is often the sole baggage of the Irish immigrant.

In that period of his life, Joyce worked and read considerably without appearing to do so. To those years belong two volumes of poems, the rough draft of a verse drama, and a prose play, which the youthful author sent in manuscript to William Archer. The Scottish critic expressed his judgment of the play in a letter in which, while stating that the play seemed to him "to reveal outstanding talent, perhaps more than talent, for the stage," he advised the author not to write plays until more experienced in the ways of the theater. At the University Joyce, now turned twenty-one, enrolled in the medical faculty; he then went on to Paris in order to continue studies at the Sorbonne, from which, after a brief sojourn, he was recalled to Dublin by the news that his mother was at the point of death.

Here I am pleased to demolish a legend. I have read in certain articles on Joyce that his dying mother begged her son to kneel and pray for her, and that Joyce refused. The legend will have it that the remorse consequent upon this refusal tormented him through the years of his maturity. The episode happened otherwise. The order, a peremptory one, came from an uncle and went unheeded. His mother, by that time, was no longer conscious. She had been the companion of his boyhood devotions, when he was very religious. When he was no longer so, his mother, after a first bitter and painful conflict, very rarely reproached him for his change of belief. In fact she proved quite resigned. Perhaps she hoped that his new attitude would turn out to be merely a passing phase of his volatile temperament, and that with time religious feeling would well up in him again with renewed vigor. The incident has been overdramatized. I surmise, rather, that every human being who has known the torment of thought, once he has left his youth behind him and achieved maturity, clings spiritually to one or the other parent; and in the case of a writer, this elective affinity influences powerfully his creative work.

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Those who feel more strongly the maternal pull are for the most part inclined to the sorry wisdom of rigid judgments; while those coming under paternal sway seem of a broader humanity. In the case of Shakespeare it is known that he procured for his father the title of "Gentleman." Some commentators have hinted that this was a cunning means of inheriting the distinction himself. But it would seem no exaggeration to hold that Shakespeare assessed such honorifics at their true value; that he was moved, rather, by the desire to restore honor and ease to the old man at Stratford, who had lost both in a bankruptcy proceeding; and that in treating the father-children theme, the author of *Hamlet* and *Lear* could illuminate his subject out of his own deep personal feeling. Dickens' Micawber, a character brimming with inspired comic vitality, is evidently a figure beloved of his creator, while Mrs. Nickleby, who is said to be modeled after Dickens' mother, is a pale figure by comparison. The elective affinities of Goldsmith and Carlyle, of Ruskin, Shaw, and Lawrence are well known. In Joyce's case, his thought is dominated by the binomial: *pater et patria*. For a writer so intensely introspective and at the same time so realistic, each character he depicts is not only drawn from life, recreated imaginatively, and elaborated patiently, but is also the epitome of all the generations preceding it, and their symbol. Joyce's father was an indefatigable chatterbox, gifted with a certain wit, who knew every square foot of Dublin. With the passing years, as the perspective of his native town faded more and more into the past, father and country compacted in one potent appeal before the expatriate's vision. His mother, on the other hand, came to symbolize for him apprehensive womanhood (with its piteous, insistent attempt to impede the adventures of the spirit), especially Irish womanhood, that accomplice of Irish Catholicism—itself the scullery-maid of Christendom, as Joyce styled it—which is the most puritanical form of Christianity, the vigilant, pitiless enemy of intellectual freedom and the joy of living, a cross between English puritanism and all that is least enlightened in Catholic thought. The last time I saw Joyce, at Zurich, he told me that he had come there mainly to persuade a

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Swiss composer of his acquaintance to set to music a libretto he had drawn from Byron's *Cain*. He was unsuccessful; but it was clear to me that he was still obsessed with the theme of the struggle between the mother (who lives in the fear of God) and her outcast son, condemned to wander over the face of a hostile earth. It saddened me.

In the period following his mother's death Joyce still maintained an interest in theosophy, reading everything on the subject he could lay his hands on. He read Swedenborg, Blake, Madame Blavatsky, Colonel Olcott, Leadbeater, and Annie Besant. It was on this common theosophic terrain that he made the acquaintance of the poet-painter-economist, George Russell, who published his poems under the initials A. E. At their first encounter they discussed theosophy, at Russell's home, until almost daybreak. Knowing Joyce's satiric humor, the other young writers of the group laughed over this encounter later, believing that Joyce had been pulling Russell's leg. And Joyce let them talk because, as he confessed to me, he preferred they should believe a hoax had been perpetrated rather than have them discover his naïveté in the matter. Theosophy was perhaps the only one of his enthusiasms which he came to regard as a total loss; all that was to remain of it was his interest in dreams. He used to make notes of the dreams that impressed him most, interpreting them and investigating their causes after a method of his own. This habit he continued at Trieste. The importance he attached to them may be deduced from the fact that his last book, to which he devoted seventeen years, takes the form of an extremely long dream.

In truth, it was not to theosophy but to art that he was to devote the ardor of his temperament and not a little of his intransigence. At the outset it was the ardor of an inquisitor. He burned the dramatic sketch in verse and the prose play—which he no longer liked; and of the two volumes of poems only forty survived the holocaust. From these he made up a volume which I entitled *Chamber Music*. The lyrics are arranged in a definite order and seem to tell the story of a love that did not endure. The style is

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reminiscent of the Elizabethan lyricists, or of Herrick and Blake, those imitators of the Elizabethans. Some critics do not find them very original, although Yeats and Arthur Symons, two authoritative critics, admired them. It must be remembered that they were all written before the poet was twenty, most of them at the age of eighteen and nineteen, yet they disclose rare mastery of the difficult lyric form, such as to support a comparison with the juvenilia of even the greatest English poets. With these poems Joyce wished to affirm, amidst the confused and mendacious vociferations of the national scene, the reality of poetic experience. They are an artlessly joyous celebration of re-acquired vitality and freedom. Pervaded by a restless sensitivity to the joy of things, they are distinguished by finesse, musical quality, and the ability to capture — with words — the fugitive, eucharistic moments of poetic inspiration.

Many years later, after the publication of *Ulysses,* Joyce came out with another little volume, even more slender than the first, containing but twelve poems and bearing the contemptuous title, *Pomes Penyeach.* This book sold for a shilling. In selling his poems at a shilling the dozen, the author was comparing himself to some ignorant market-woman selling her apples at a penny each. The *Pomes Penyeach* are not as fresh and spontaneous as those in the first collection, but they disclose an equal craftsmanship in the lyric form and a greater intensity of thought and of phrase. It would not be out of place to find an analogy between these two exiguous productions and the *Songs of Innocence* and *Songs of Experience* of Blake, a poet much admired by Joyce and on whom he lectured in Italian at Trieste before the War of 1914. Many of Joyce's poems have been set to music, one of them, "Oh, it was out by Donnycarney," a number of times. He himself, though not a musician, had a very fine musical sensibility and used to improvise accompaniments at the piano, which often reminded one of liturgical chants, especially when he recited his own verses or those of other Irish poets which he knew by heart. One of these improvisations, transcribed for pianoforte by an American composer, was sung by Joyce's son over the Paris radio.

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About the time of the sifting of his manuscripts, Joyce began to note down little character-revealing dialogues or impressions which he sought to fix and reduce to poems in prose, sometimes devoting an entire day of nervous activity to writing a half-page. The manuscript of this medley he called *Epiphanies*, revelations. The rudely frank quality of some of these jottings gave Russell a jolt, but Joyce was to incorporate nearly all of them in his work. Yeats, to whom Joyce presented himself at a chance street encounter, had a different response to them. After reading the surviving poems and prose writings, he wrote a long four-page letter (which I still hope to find among my papers) encouraging Joyce to dedicate himself to a literary career and telling him that he had a very delicate talent, whether for poetry or prose he could not as yet quite say.

Among the circle of young literary men more or less headed by Russell, Joyce made a number of other acquaintances, notably that of the poet Gogarty, later a senator of the Republic of Eire, but in those days himself a medical student. Gogarty was fat and very robust, an amateur athlete who on three occasions saved a life from the dirty waters of the Liffey, the third of these his own when, during the disorders of twenty years ago, he leaped into the stream in order to shake off the emissaries of the Irish Republican Army. Making good his escape to London, he sent back two swans to the River Liffey as an expression of thanksgiving. As a student he was overflowing with energy and spirit. He was perhaps the wittiest man in Dublin, a city which has given English literature some of its greatest wits: from Swift and Sheridan to Wilde and Shaw. There were two Gogartys available to the public: one, the friend of amateur and professional sportsmen, with his inexhaustible supply of very free verse, free not in the metrical sense, of course, but in that of subject matter; and Gogarty the romantic poet. Though of a very dissimilar character, Joyce and Gogarty became friends, and this friendship, which was broken off before he left Dublin, strongly influenced Joyce's life and character.

If, from what I have said up to this point, I give the impression that Joyce as a youth was grave, melancholy, or spiteful, I have

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left a false impression. Uncompromising in all that concerned his artistic integrity, Joyce was, for the rest, of a sociable and amiable disposition. Around his tall, agile figure there hovered a certain air of youthful grace and, despite the squalor of his home, a sense of happiness, as of one who feels within himself a joyous courage, a resolute confidence in life and his own powers. He was youthful even for his age. He was called the Bard, not so much because of his own poetry but because he also recited the poems of others so well. Even Lady Gregory, who had heard so many poets recite their verse, was fascinated by the way Joyce read his; and Yeats was moved to compare him to Morris for the joyous vitality one felt in him. Joyce's laugh was characteristic. He would stop abruptly, throw back his head like a dog about to bay, and explode in a ringing laugh which annoyed the respectable. Or at least so it seemed; for once, while he was laughing in the midst of a group of students in front of the National Library, an old lady emerged from the headquarters of the Society for the Dissemination of the Bible opposite, approached the group, and exclaimed in a rage: "What is the matter with that young man? He must be ill. You should look after him and take him home." She was confirming, probably without being aware of it, Leopardi's observations on the rage that the laughter of others excites in us. In a way the old woman was right. There is only one kind of laughter in the Bible: sardonic; and up to that time Joyce's laugh was of that pure hilarity which does not contort the mouth. He could not abide the melancholy of Irish poetry and music. He used to say that Ireland had contributed nothing to European literature but a whine. He loved and sang traditional English music; he had a predilection for the lyric of Elizabeth's time, when England was "a garden of singing birds." If I linger to describe Joyce as a student, it is not merely out of nostalgia however impelling, but also because he lived those years so intensely that in such work as *Chamber Music, Dubliners, Portrait of the Artist,* and *Ulysses* he is in a sense only reliving that period in the light of a more seasoned experience. His burning desire was to live. "To live, to err, to fall, to triumph, to recreate life out

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of life." The will to live, he would say, was paralyzed in Ireland. He even contemplated giving up the idea of a literary career; at the very most he would limit himself to correcting the grammatical errors of his contemporaries. In Ireland there was, perhaps there still is, an institution called the Music Festival. Its promoters used to make a country-wide effort to unearth and encourage, by means of competitions, promising composers, instrumentalists, and singers. Joyce signed up for the tenor competition. He won only third prize, because he was unable to read music at sight, but the judge, the composer Luigi Denza, added a note to his report warmly advising Joyce to study for the musical stage.

In his relations with other writers of what later became the Neo-Celtic School, a latent hostility to him made itself felt. He was resented in the first place because he stood aloof from every purely national tendency and called himself a socialist; and also because he was their superior in culture, in talent, and, what is more important for an artist, in his rare and exceptional sensibility. "Those big words which make us so unhappy"—religion, country, duty, art—were not for him vague sounds by which one accedes to what is not understood. They were harassing realities. He taxed his contemporaries with being theoretically heterodox, but in practice orthodox and domesticated, like the good little parlor revolutionaries they were. Before certain manifestations of ignoble sycophantism and cowardice, his indignation poured forth in scathing Swiftian language. Bacon says that whoever causes others to fear him for his wit will have good cause to fear their memory. Many were to cherish grudges against Joyce for his cold disdain. For his part he had decided to be in act what he was in thought and inclination, even if it meant risking career and happiness. He was, then, overwhelmingly their superior on the score of moral courage, destined as he was to a lonely battle and the most important victory ever won in English literature for the unconditional freedom of the artist. The physical courage which man shares with the animals did not claim Joyce's admiration. At school he had always been sarcastic about the heroes of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, who, as it seemed to him, had

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developed their taurine bodies at the expense of their brains. Only Ulysses, astute and patient, did he find profoundly human. For Joyce only moral courage was truly virile: the courage of Oedipus who wants to know at all costs, even if it means enduring opprobrium and exile, the monstrous truth about himself; the courage of Perseus who battles with ugliness without allowing his heart to turn to stone within his breast; and the courage of his own Dedalus who refuses to serve what he no longer believes in, who does not hesitate to make what may prove to be a great mistake, a life-long mistake and perhaps as long as eternity, too.

Joyce had turned down the post of assistant professor at the University, but he accepted a very poorly remunerated position in a small private school near Dublin. In addition he wrote book reviews for a Dublin newspaper. Until that time he had always been abstemious. The young men of Dublin, whether students or artists, are not skirt-chasers but tipplers; but with Joyce the opposite was true, and his friends deliberately set about to make a drinker of him as well. This is not the mere invention of one who fought a long time in opposition to them and who lost the struggle. The fact is that they openly proclaimed their intentions of breaking his spirit by leading him to drink. No doubt there was a hereditary tendency, albeit such a tendency is never decisive. Moved by a Shakespearean reminiscence, he began by drinking sack, the dry wine of the Canary Islands dear to Falstaff, but soon he sank to the black beer brewed by Guinness, and his carousals became legendary. In a conventional city like Dublin, where the least deviation from the norm is swiftly noted, Joyce's dress was conspicuous: the fluttering Bohemian necktie, the inseparable ashplant, and the round soft felt hat which in Dublin is in vogue only among Protestant pastors. One evening, on one of his more dramatic sprees, some of his companions carried him aloft through the streets while one of them headed the procession, bearing his hat-topped ashplant as though it were a cross. The street urchins, seeing the hat, began to jump and scamper round the group crying: "Look! Look at the Protestant minister blind to Jaysus!"

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He also ran up debts, borrowing money right and left. These debts were always small: all of them together could not have amounted to more than a few pounds sterling; but Dublin is not a rich town. In English slang, to borrow money from someone, *pomparlo* in Italian, is expressed by the verb "to touch," that is, *toccare delicatamente*. In this connection Gogarty concocted a limerick in which he advised Joyce, who had "touched" everybody, to begin touching his lyre again.

But Joyce was never to do this. Instead, at Russell's invitation, he began to send to the *Irish Homestead* the first of those stories which were later collected in the volume, *Dubliners*. This agricultural magazine, which was circulated in the country, wanted to publish a story a week, and Russell suggested something along humorous, sentimental, or romantic lines. Before leaving Dublin Joyce wrote three stories, but the editor of this modest review for country people was not satisfied. He recognized that the author had a brilliant style, but he could not see much originality there. It is often asserted that Joyce's stories display the influence of Maupassant. Joyce admired Maupassant's works, but objected that at times the French writer was too summary in his insistent desire to achieve definition in a single phrase and often harsh in judging the characters of his short stories. His stories are always the narration of some anecdote, diverting, *décolleté*, pathetic, or brutal as the case may be, in the course of which the life of his characters seems to rise to some momentary pitch of interest only to sink back to a plane of banality where Maupassant no longer follows it up. In Joyce's stories, on the other hand, it is precisely the everyday life of his characters that claims his interest; and the plot, in itself so tenuous as scarcely to merit the name, serves only to illuminate a certain moment of that daily life. Judgment is always suspended. The author's business is to narrate. Conjectures and interrogations he keeps to himself, or if on rare occasions they obtrude, they are unexpected and full of meaning.

In Joyce, literary conscience had superseded religious conscience, the spoken word God's word—with undiminished intransigence and scrupulousness. He insisted on the necessity of the

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mere act of writing, and to the very end, in spite of his near-blindness, he continued to write with the aid of a magnifying lens. During the time of his first ocular disorders, at Trieste, he dictated to me the end of his story, *The Dead*. In the evening, when I had some free time, he would dictate what he had composed mentally during the day; but generally he avoided dictation so as not to be trapped into mere facility. His final manuscripts contained no corrections to speak of. He was not a writer dependent on the impulses of the moment. He knew the "fine frenzy" of the poet, but he was its master, making it serve his own conscious purposes. He often cited verses from one of Ibsen's poems, to the effect that "To poetize means to pass upon one's self the last judgment." He worked with indefatigable patience, above all with patience. Occasionally, when, in conversation with me, he would inveigh freely against someone and I would say to him: "And now where is that patience which you brag about so much?" he would retort: "But I didn't write it, did I?" Then referring to himself in the third person, he would add ironically: "When the bard sits down to write, he intellectualizes himself."

During his Paris sojourn he had mapped out his aesthetic, and he was never to deviate from it. In Joyce's work the architectonic plan prevails. He never laid a finger to his work until that plan had been clearly elaborated in his head. Thus, *Ulysses* could be called not so much a novel as a cathedral in prose, as simple in design as a cross (it is only the story of a day, from morning to early morning again). But anyone examining its detail will find several generations of Irish history superimposed one upon another; he will find chapels dedicated to religion, science, the arts, to say nothing of gargoyles; and he will find that the whole is a vast symbolic figure. To take a random example from *Ulysses*, let us consider the episode in which Leopold Bloom (the Ulysses of the novel)—who is employed by a newspaper, canvassing for commercial advertisements—goes at noon to the offices of his paper. The newsboys in the windy square are awaiting the distribution of the evening edition, while in the offices are gathered a group of persons who discuss the relative merits of Irish orators. To the

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hasty reader the discussion will seem very natural and spirited, but having no end other than to reveal various types of men and opinions. But the title *Ulysses* is the key to the book, and the perceptive reader will not fail to observe that since the annoying wind is mentioned several times (noon is a windy hour in coastal cities), it is likely that the episode corresponds to the Aeolus story in the Odyssey. In the editor's waiting-room the oratorical art is under discussion, that windy art which impels the ship of state forward. Joyce obviously intended to illustrate the influence of political rhetoric on the man in the street—since *Ulysses* is also a psychological portrait of the average man, Joyce's version of the Adam of our day. The chapter is cut up like a newspaper with its dizzying streamers and captions, the aim being to get a bead on journalism, the written rhetoric which is now used not only to distill poison in the mind of the individual, but to practice a fraud on the good faith of that other, that vaster being, the totality of a city, indeed of a country. The winds were misused by the mariners of Ulysses. Moreover, *Ulysses* is a microcosm, that is, a symbol of the human body, this chapter corresponding to the lungs. Though sustaining, in the dialogue, that natural quality and vivacity of which he was complete master, Joyce has interwoven so many rhetorical figures that Stuart Gilbert, in listing them, fills no less than three pages of his commentary on *Ulysses*. The other episodes are elaborated with the same structural complexity, symbolic profundity, and medieval precision. The big words with which humanity is infatuated are deflated like balloons by Joyce's debonair irony, so that the reader who requires that his reading be something more than a mere pastime is obliged ultimately to ask himself whether *Ulysses,* which—to view it in perspective—appeared at the end of an era of Irish (and European) history, is not perhaps worthy to figure side by side with the greatest satiric works of European literature. It is a cathedral in prose in which the text of the sermon is "In Praise of Folly."

Dubliners also has a plan: two stories treating of adolescent life, followed by stories mirroring sporting, artistic, amorous, political, religious life (with obviously parodic gestures in the direction of

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the *Divine Comedy*); two stories of bachelor life (male and female); and four on the life of petty clerks (two of them single and two of them married). The last story, a kind of choral finale to the book, presents scenes of festive life, the holiday in this case being Christmas. In England and Ireland Christmas ghost stories are still in vogue; Dickens, for instance, wrote one of the most famous of the genre. The story, *The Dead,* is also in its way a story about ghosts: the dead who come back out of envy for the happiness of the living. In this, the best story of the collection, the dead person is only a memory, but one so vivid and compelling as to spoil the sport of the living. In his description of the ball and the supper that follows it, Joyce works minutely for many pages, to create an ambiance of little bourgeois souls in all their noisiness, vulgarity, and innocuousness. When the festivity is almost at an end and the laughter at its height, a far away, barely audible voice of someone singing an old Irish air irresistibly calls back to a woman's memory a truly romantic passion which had been extinguished by death; and the memory annihilates at one stroke her present happiness and that of the leading character in the story. Then, little by little, the noise of the festivity, the passions, and the vivid remembrance of the dead, fade into the drowsiness of sleep. The stories, then, are not detached episodes unrelated to one another. They form a complex whole which is a kind of preliminary sketch of the life of Dublin, a city for which Joyce always felt the nostalgic love of a rejected exile. *Dubliners* is a preparation for *Ulysses;* many of the characters also figure in the latter book. In fact, Joyce's first conception of *Ulysses* was a novella rather longer than *The Dead,* to be included in *Dubliners.* He had also intended to include a vignette based upon a scene in the first story, *The Sisters:* the old priest stricken by hemiplegia and sunk in his armchair near the fire. This was to have been a symbol of Irish life, priest-ridden and semi-paralyzed.

Certainly, Joyce's own life was not semi-paralyzed. He was never a man to mark time. He even had good ideas of a practical nature, which, however, were received skeptically—in consideration of their source. At that time the Irish National Theater was

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coming into being, under the name of the Literary Theater, and as a protest against the commercialism of the English stage. Productions were given here and there in halls hastily decorated for the occasion. Joyce suggested the leasing of the Mechanics Theater, which was a tiny theater belonging to the recreation auxiliary of the Mechanics Guild; dependent upon membership dues for its funds, it was having difficulty in paying its rent. The idea of leasing it seemed so comic that Yeats was inspired to coin a tag phrase to describe bad, limping verse: Mechanics Theater verse. And yet, I believe, it was that very hall, enlarged and modernized, which several years later became the home of the Irish National Theater, now under state subsidy. Welcoming the program of opposition to English commercialism, Joyce sought to induce the directors to present the dramas of Ibsen, Strindberg, Hauptmann, and Maeterlinck, because—as he said—Ireland had no dramatic tradition of its own and since it would not have England's, it ought to model itself after the best Continental productions. He translated *Before Dawn* and *Michael Kramer* by Hauptmann, with the intention of offering them to the Theater; and he also offered himself, in case the directors consented to present *Hedda Gabler,* for the role of Eilert Lövborg—a role which would have fitted him, as he was then, like a glove. But he did not succeed in having himself taken seriously. All the Theater wanted were patriotic works, and Joyce held that programmatic patriotism was as damaging to art as commercialism. After several years of residence at Trieste Joyce returned to Dublin and opened there the first movie-house in Ireland. It was not—as might have been predicted—a successful business move, for he had no inclination to remain in Dublin as the manager of a movie-house; he considered movies on the same entertainment level as cafés.

Even before the divergence of ideas, the editor of an experimental review, *Dana,* had asked him to write an article for him. Working rapidly, Joyce threw together in one day an article which he entitled "Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man." Some little time before this he had asked me for some subjects for essays, and I had noted a few which had some bearing on his life

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at the time and of which I remember only two: "Revellers" and "A Portrait of the Artist." The latter was suggested to me by the first flush of admiration for Henry James's *Portrait of a Lady,* which I had just finished reading. Joyce now chose it as the title for his piece. The editor, Ryan, rejected the article, giving as his reason the sexual experiences narrated in it. Joyce was not convinced that this was his real motive. It appeared to him that the editor had rejected the article out of a feeling that it was intolerably arrogant of a young man barely twenty-one to be writing an article on himself. No more was needed to make a writer of his temper rear up in defiance. He immediately went to work on a novel of the same title, the intention being to make a fictionalized autobiography of it. He wrote several chapters which were admired by those who had access to the manuscript. It proved pleasing in this form because it recalled Meredith and disturbed no one. The author himself was the least satisfied. He kept promising himself that he would go back to it and rewrite it from the beginning; and he announced his intention of devoting several years to its composition. When Gogarty would present Joyce to his Oxford friends, he was wont to say in accents of rising astonishment: "This is the man who intends to write a novel in fifteen years." It did not take fifteen years; it took ten. When he left Dublin he took the manuscript with him and at Trieste continued it for several chapters. When he resolved to finish *Dubliners,* he laid *The Portrait* aside, but taking it up again later, he transformed and rewrote it from start to finish. It was no longer an autobiography in the usual sense but the portrait of an artist who grows up amidst influences which battle against him and challenge the free development of his personality. Of the Meredithian humorism, not a trace remained. The experiences are felt, in fact suffered, profoundly; and the young artist emerges from them wounded, but free and fearless. In the second version the interest has been shifted from the artist himself to his hostile surroundings. It was Joyce's resolved and declared purpose to synthesize in literary form, by taking the greatest liberties, the influences and environment which had produced him. Because of

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the painful frankness of some of the episodes, not a single English editor ventured to publish it. The author, uncompromising in anything that involved his artistic conscience, refused to change so much as a comma. The struggle lasted several years. During the War of 1914, the novel appeared in installment form in a courageous review, *The Egoist*. The magazine had a broil with the censorship, but finally the novel came out, and immediately afterwards an American publisher put it out in book form. It was an immediate success.

At a time when the entire little literary world of Dublin had finally turned against him, when his every activity was being blocked and everything issuing from his pen censured, Joyce fell in love with a girl from western Ireland and eloped with her. I had a spirited quarrel over this matter with Russell, who favored me with a tirade against my brother. The contest proved somewhat unequal. I was nineteen at the time, and Russell a seasoned man and the recognized leader of a literary school. Russell made a special point of expressing his sympathy for "the poor girl." He was tacitly assuming that Joyce intended to abandon her. I listened a while, then said: "Before you condemn Joyce, it might be wiser to wait until he has actually abandoned 'the poor girl'." But Russell went on with his invective: he knew Joyce's character by now, he said, and in his opinion a touch of starvation for a time abroad would do him good. When I received the news that my brother had found a position in a school, I sought a second encounter with Russell. "I am afraid," said I, "that 'touch of starvation' must be postponed." Russell said he was glad to hear it. "And," I added, "it's a pity that you did not say to my brother when he was here all that you said to me." Russell grew very angry, and began to splutter in his beard. "I would have said it," he retorted, "if I had thought of it." "I didn't say you *wouldn't,*" I answered, "I said you *didn't,* that was all," and with that I walked away.

Admittedly Joyce was a very difficult person, but the fact remains that when one has the ideas Russell was expressing in that colloquy, one does not become the revolutionary leader of a

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literary school. One remains a bookkeeper in the drapery line, and that's the end of it. Russell and Joyce never did agree, except at the beginning of their acquaintance, not only because Joyce was a restless and intractable spirit, but also because these two, alone among the writers of the group, had been tormented by passionate religious crises at the beginnings of their intellectual development. But while Russell had later come to look at the world from a tranquil, sidereal point of view, Joyce's world was the agitated and earthy one of a man enamored of mortal beauty. Russell, it is true, also concerned himself with purely economic problems; but for the rest he moved in an inner world which contained scarcely anything human. Joyce's pitiless daemon never allowed him to shut his eyes to external revelation. Russell's pity for "the poor girl" was no more than a pretext. Actually he nursed a grudge against Joyce because of the latter's satirical attitude toward him; and like all Irishmen he lived in terror of satire. When one of the outstanding Irish writers of the present day found out that Joyce was writing *Ulysses,* he begged him in the most abject manner imaginable, on meeting him during a visit to Dublin, not to put him into his book—without, however, succeeding in moving him.

I do not propose to make this a biography of Joyce. I shall only say that until his death in Zurich, he never left his wife's side (they were eventually married in a civil ceremony) except for a few weeks, and then with the greatest reluctance. A little more than a year after his departure from Dublin, he invited me to join him in Trieste, which I did.

Thus ended the attempt to live in Dublin according to some merry Elizabethan mode, and *Chamber Music* may be considered the poetic expression of that attempt. It was destined to failure in any case, but the poet might conceivably have survived the collapse of his dreams, like Falk in Ibsen's *Love's Comedy.* In Joyce the lyric poet came to an early end. He tried at Trieste to take up where he had left off, but unsuccessfully. He complained to me that for years he had not even had time to think. However, the Dubliners had little cause for self-congratulation, since from the

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ashes of the lyric poet was born, like the phoenix (which is the family crest), a satiric poet armed cap-a-pie, beak, claws, and all. But his subsequent derisive attitude was in exact proportion to the bitterness of his disenchantment, his disconcerting verism was the blasphemy of the idealist.

When I joined him in Trieste, he was working from morning till night, first at the Berlitz School, then by giving private lessons, in order to support his family; and at that difficult point of his life I came upon the scene as a kind of extra draught horse. He still had the same intemperate habits, and I set about deliberately to break him of them. I was under no illusion of being able to influence him permanently; I simply wanted with some opportune stroke to even the keel of his listing domestic bark. Often I was obliged to seek him out in the taverns about Punto Franco, where I would find him discussing socialism with the dock porters for whom he stood drinks. They addressed him as "Sir," and he addressed them as "Sir." Evidently it was not a very chummy variety of socialism. I would sit down with them, and after a while, with one excuse or another, I would get him to leave the tavern, and finally by hook or by crook I brought him home. At last I succeeded in my intent; he became abstemious again. But such victories are not won without bitterness. In Ireland and in England it is customary to defend inebriety on the grounds that alcohol stimulates the intellect and makes for sociability; that intoxication frees the mind from that respect for persons and those conventional trammels which spell death for the artist. Aldington, for example, claims that in curing Swinburne of his intemperance, Watts-Dunton won for England a good citizen of which there are far too many, and ruined the last of the great poets of which there are only too few. I do not share this theory, and I believe I have had a more intimate experience of the abuses of alcohol than Mr. Aldington. During his first years of sobriety, Joyce wrote, first, *Chamber Music,* then at Trieste the greater part of *Dubliners;* also, he rewrote *The Portrait* from start to finish, wrote the play *Exiles,* and conceived and wrote a considera-

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able part of *Ulysses,* to say nothing of bringing his exhausting battle against the censorship to a successful conclusion. And that is enough for me.

At Trieste I found him somewhat changed. He had not lost his gaiety, and was ever prompt to burst into uproarious laughter in his conversations with Professor Francini—who had become a friend of his and who lived nearby, in the same quarter of the city. Alessandro Francini was the first person whom he met at Pola (which was still under the Austrians), upon his arrival there from Ireland. The same humanistic and Catholic education made them understand each other particularly well. Then they suffered the same fate when they were obliged to remove from Pola to Trieste. Here their friendship became firmly based, and, until Joyce's departure for Rome, the two families—by then I also had arrived from Dublin—were very close. A first son had already been born to Joyce, and despite his dissoluteness, he was always a devoted father. With Francini he continued the study of Italian which he had begun in secondary school and at the University College of Dublin with Father Ghezzi. After his return from Rome he resumed study with Francini and it is to him that Joyce owed in no small part "his great and perfect knowledge of Italian" and "of the meaning and glottological value of Italian vocables," which Carlo Linati has noted. Also Francini was among the first to lecture on Joyce in Italy. When one of Joyce's students would ask: "How much time does it take to learn English?" Joyce would answer dryly: "Fifteen years. I have been studying Italian for fifteen years and I am just now beginning to know it."

Roberto Prezioso invited him to contribute to *Il Piccolo* of Trieste and the Università Popolare requested him to lecture in Italian on Irish history and English literature. But in the literary work he did in English he seemed now to look with ironic skepticism on the ideals which had dominated him so powerfully and to consider his deluded youth with a pitying glance. Some years later, when the editor Elkin Mathews was about to publish his poetry, Joyce actually wished at the last minute to wire the editor to stop publication. The feeling of the poetry, he said, was false.

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I had to move heaven and earth to keep him from going ahead. Almost forcibly detaining him in Piazza delle Poste at Trieste in the small hours of the morning, I finally succeeded in convincing him that if he came out with any book whatsoever, even a book of poems, it would be easier to find a publisher for the volume of stories. There had become manifest in him that trait of character so common among Irishmen, which might be called the Irish paradox: fidelity to one woman and at the same time a deep hostility to women in general. Perhaps this is due to the puritanism which is at the heart of Irish Catholicism. The Irish marry early, as though to get it over with; they are, with rare exceptions, faithful husbands, but they nurse an ill-concealed hatred for womankind. One would think, at least in the case of the loftier spirits among them, that they were the jealous guardians of some sacred mission which might conceivably be threatened by womankind. It would be interesting to investigate whether the frigidity, bigotry, and absolute lack of romanticism of Irish women is innate or whether these traits are unconsciously willed by the males of the race—for fundamentally men always blame women for the life-style which they themselves have wished upon them. Observing that Irish peasants prefer any other kind of song to love songs, Lady Gregory cites a Scottish-Gaelic proverb: "Loveless as an Irishman." This strange attitude, a composite of desire and contempt, finds its most pitiless expression in the last chapter of *Ulysses,* where Joyce lays bare the soul of a woman. He used to tell me of hearing that a professor of theology in an Irish seminary had spoken at great length of this chapter, citing it as a hideous picture of the soul brutalized by mortal sin. The professor could readily have found something not too dissimilar in the writings of the Church Fathers. As for me, I hesitate to believe this little story, simply because I should hesitate to give any member of the Irish clergy credit for so much literary intelligence.

I found that Joyce had blunted somewhat the edge of that haughtiness with which he had been wont to treat the interests of average people. In some stories written at Dublin one could already notice a change. Clearly, his thought was maturing. In

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Ireland, a country which has seen revolutions in every generation, there exists no national tradition, properly speaking. Nothing is stable in that country, nothing is stable in the minds of the Irish. When an Irish artist begins to write, he has to stake out his own moral universe unaided. This is an enormous disadvantage for second-rate talents but an enormous advantage for original, powerful talents. The Irish have the further advantage, as writers, of being unhappy. Unhappiness is a vise which constrains them either to look the truth in the eye or to take refuge in dreams. No convenient compromise is possible. When an English writer, Wells or Huxley or Aldington say, deals with social problems, one has the impression that even if the problems are real and the writer is making an effort to be sincere, the life that has produced him is generally stable and balanced; and if he goes in for extremes, it is largely a picturesque attitudinizing, as when Tolstoy puts on his Russian smock-frock and proceeds to play the role of holy peasant. The characters in the novels of the writers in question are leisurely and cultivated. They discuss problems instead of playing golf: all this does them honor, but it is not very important. The final impression is one of an after-dinner academic discussion. In Ireland, on the other hand, the dinner often isn't there, and the discussion takes on, consequently, quite a different tone. For Joyce, life was not an interesting argument, it was a passion; his works do not flake off as mere discussions, you will not find what are called opinions thrown out just to score a point.

When war broke out in 1914, he and I were separated. Joyce was able to get to Switzerland. There, a doctor told him that he was anemic and that he ought to drink. The counsel was readily accepted.

A play bearing the title *Exiles,* which Joyce had completed before the War of 1914, was staged during the war at Munich in Bavaria, in German translation. In it he treats the theme of doubt as an aspect of that liberty in which he believed as few have ever believed, though recognizing its dangers and disadvantages. In the relationship between a man and woman, joined in a free union, the liberty which both desire to hold onto is put to a severe

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test. More than a strange open struggle between two men for a woman, it is a struggle between two spiritual tendencies for the mastery of the soul of Ireland as it is embodied by the woman. Roughly speaking, the world divides off into two classes of persons. First, those for whom life is a bold adventure, in which every risk and hope is embraced; second, all others, who seek by reason and experience to carve out a stability and a certitude which life perhaps does not allow of. The latter want to mold life to some reasoned plan of theirs and willingly sacrifice liberty on the altar of the trinity: order, certitude, security. The first group conform to the exigencies of life as they arise. The interest that Joyce always showed in the Catholic Church came from the fact that he held Catholic philosophy to be the most coherent effort to achieve that spiritual and material stability. In his case, however, liberty was a necessity; it was the guiding theme of his life. For its sake he renounced security, preferred chance to order, and accepted doubt as its ineluctable condition. Life, he said, is suspended in the element of doubt as the world is suspended in the void. In *Exiles,* the prize for which these opposing tendencies (which show signs of losing their first enthusiastic impetus and degenerating into system) contend is the unsophisticated soul of the woman, who has little comprehension of the struggle of which she is the object. From a mere reading it is difficult to form an opinion of a play, but for the present writer at least, *Exiles* suffers somewhat from the logical necessity of the theme, that is, the doubt inhering in liberty; and the mental anguish of the two leading characters seems to remain unresolved. The influence of Ibsen's social dramas is obvious; but despite the symbolic intention, the characters are sincerely drawn, and come to life.

After the War, Joyce returned to Trieste. He lavished any amount of labor on *Ulysses* but his intemperance had become greater than ever. He spoke of himself as "the foolish author of a wise book." Having recently returned from four years behind barbed wire, I had no desire to take upon myself the burden of effecting another cure. Moreover, I felt that he had let me down.

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Joyce then went to Paris, after which I saw him but rarely. I wrangled with him over *Finnegans Wake*, by correspondence and at different encounters in Paris, Salzburg, or Zurich. *Finnegans Wake* is, so to speak, a sibylline book and, as I have said, a very long dream: a Dublin night to match the Dublin day which is *Ulysses*. Whoever takes the trouble of reading it straight through will have the impression of a mad dream ride on a witch's broom through clouds that now and then thin out, affording glimpses of queer, distorted landscapes which abruptly vanish. After his contemplation of the minutiae of everyday lower middle-class life in Dublin, Joyce must have felt the need for a more spacious, a cosmic, theme. He found it in the history of Dublin, considered as an aspect of universal history in the framework of Viconian philosophy. He had said that history was a nightmare from which he was trying to awaken. *Finnegans Wake* is that nightmare which, in this dream-story, becomes mythology, the dawn dream of history. The story of the Irish capital is tumultuously projected, distorted, and transformed in the dream of an inn-keeper who seems to have been born with a double dose of original sin. Faithful to his method, Joyce wishes to suggest much more than he says; and by charging his naturalism—which allows of no reticences—with a universal symbolic significance, to place characters and incidents in relation to forces as old as life itself. Persuaded that dream language ought to be completely different from the language of the waking mind, since it must express nebulous and chaotic images, Joyce invented his own language by basing himself upon unexpected associations of words and rapid displacements of ideas, on verbal invaginations (such as portmanteau words) and other lexical virtuosities, and by availing himself of his knowledge of many languages.

Theoretically, this is all very well perhaps, but what is the good if the word ceases to be the vehicle of thought? It seemed to me that this language was as completely artificial as that of *Alice in Wonderland* and far too experimental to be the fruit of so many years of labor. Beyond that, it appeared to me an artistic exaggeration due to the influence of Paris, where admiration for originality

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is pushed to the point of a worship of eccentricity. Opposition was necessary to Joyce; it was breath to his nostrils. Hostile criticism always spurred him to the most daring affirmations. I had the impression that owing to the tenor of his life, self-criticism had suffered, and that, surrounded by admirers of both sexes, he had acquired an attitude far too overbearing toward that poor devil, the reader. Unfortunately, every artist, unless he keeps his brain packed in ice, tends to charlatanry in a season of success, just as milk turns sour in summer.

The admirers of *Finnegans Wake* always cite the same passages and repeat the same explanations. It is palpable that they only report what has been explained to them. By themselves they don't understand much of it. Gillet, in an article in the *Revue des Deux Mondes,* makes perhaps the best critical defense of the book. He writes: "*Comme un arbre au feuillage immense et chargé de murmures, l'univers repose sur la conscience du dormeur. Somnia somniorum.*" *Ulysses,* according to him, is a book *debout; Finnegans Wake* a book *couché.* Among other things he says that Joyce claimed to have put the English language to sleep. The patient reader too, unfortunately. Even Gillet suggests for future editions an inter-pagination with explanatory matter, a kind of first aid for the reader. Let people admire away. I know that they admire what they don't comprehend—the most humiliating form of intellectual servitude. These and other things I said and wrote to Joyce. Discussing with him at an earlier date the Sirens episode in his *Ulysses,* especially the prelude to the episode, I insisted that whatever value a work of art might innately contain for the author himself and for the sophisticated reader, the work should also have a formal, exterior significance for the plain reader, otherwise it risks becoming a nose-tweaking, beard-pulling farce at the public's expense. It seemed to me that, in *Finnegans Wake,* this necessary element was completely lacking.

My insistence had, it would seem, some effect, since at one moment Joyce thought of leaving off, and—as he told me—actually asked James Stephens to continue the book. I knew that Joyce set no great store by those books which can be swallowed

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at a gulp; I knew that a work had to have a sturdy bone structure: that was his method; and I could give myself no peace that Joyce should, as I thought, waste so many years of his life and a literary talent so prodigious on a book which, once finished, nobody could read. When *Finnegans Wake* was published, on the author's fifty-eighth birthday, my brother wrote to me offering a copy in homage. I refused it. There is little need to tell how much regret this refusal has since cost me—even less need when the uselessness of all regret is considered. He told me that there would be a third part, "The Reawakening." I found myself hoping that after so many years of inspired technical experiment and of investigation of the very soul of language, Joyce would render to expressive literary art a service comparable to that rendered to science by the microscope, and that in the "Reawakening," his style would achieve a suggestive efficacy such as to surpass even the best pages of *Ulysses*. I could hardly wait for the light to break, for the day when a language would be spoken that all could understand. The work must remain forever incomplete now that the author is immersed in a sleep that knows neither dreams nor reawakening.

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(*Translated by Felix Giovanelli*)

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The Principles of Creation in Art

SUSANNE K. LANGER

IN THE STUDY of music as a form of expression[1] I came to the conclusion that music "expresses" feeling as words express ideas, rather than as tears and laughter express emotions; that it is a *symbol* whereby we understand the characteristic forms of sentience, because the symbolic structure of sound articulates with great precision the structure of feeling in its passage; and that it is not necessarily a *symptom* showing that the performer has a certain feeling, or that the composer had it when he invented the expressive form.

The problem of symbolism and significance involved in such a thesis is, of course, still open to debate, but I do not wish to reiterate my views on it here. Let us accept, for the moment, the notion that any logical form, even other than what is known as "discursive" form, may symbolize factors in experience wherein the same pattern can be detected, and that music *presents* to us the life of feeling because music and sentience have a similar structure, a common pattern. The purpose of this essay is to set forth some ideas about art in general, which follow from that assumption.

A theory of music is one thing, a general theory of art is quite another. It is plausible enough to call musical form a direct presentation of feeling, but what of the forms created in painting and sculpture, which throughout the ages have been copied from animate or inanimate nature, and thus appeared to present objects rather than feelings? Furthermore, if we do extend the theory of "non-discursive symbolization" to cover plastic art as well as music, where does that leave us in regard to literature, which uses the discursive medium of language as its prime, if not sole, material? Shall we, like Schopenhauer, interpose a realm of Platonic

[1]See *Philosophy in a New Key*, Ch. 8.

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Ideas to overcome the particularity of depicted objects, and make music an exception to the scheme because it sets forth its vital import directly?

The best approach to all these problems is, I believe, a consistent pursuit of the central idea of non-discursive symbolic form; and a general solution results if we consider any and every art as *the making of the symbol.* This is the principle of generalization, which I propose to apply undistractedly to the consecutive questions that arise in the course of any complex problem. Most people can recall the distress they suffered in school when faced with mathematical questions, until they learned the most important lesson of elementary mathematics—*to trust the general principle,* and always seek a transformation of apparently recalcitrant instances that will make them amenable to its use—in other words, make them "examples" of a known and negotiable form. The principle here proposed is really very powerful to distinguish and yet relate the several arts, and show them all equally creative, equally important and original, equally intellectual, emotional, and moral, yet each independent, and ultimately self-sufficient.

A work of art is essentially an appearance, a "form" in the broadest sense of that very broad word. I do not say a sensuous form, as most aestheticians would, because in some arts, e.g. literature, the sensuous element is variable and sometimes even negligible. But every art-work is a perceptual form, addressed to some phase of direct perception: sight, hearing, or their combination, or to that less-known organ of direct intuitions, imagination, whereby we perceive separate events, each under its own *Gestalt,* in the fluid welter of experience. It is only by virtue of form that a work can have emotive import, because its form is what makes it a possible symbol; so the artist's first aim is, necessarily, to make a form apparent, and indeed to make the impression of form paramount.

In practical life we are only vaguely aware of perceptual forms while we are dealing with real objects. Sensory impressions are mixed up, abbreviated, half-noted, as we pass with the least possible effort from them to our beliefs and interests in the object,

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or objects, which they signify. It really is only when their pragmatic functions fail—that is, when the expectations we normally base on them go unfulfilled—that we note sense-data as *sheer appearances* instead of properties of things; and then we call them "illusions."

Every work of art has an air of being somehow an illusion. This is most obvious, of course, in works that simulate the form of real objects or events, like pictures or stage actions, which show us an image of familiar experience even while we know that the scene exists only for our contemplation and not for practical purposes. The fictitious nature of such images is so striking that it has led many people to regard art as essentially "make-believe," escape from distasteful reality into a better world of dream, a playful self-deception.

Yet this theory soon reaches its limits; for, although every work of art is essentially an appearance, not every appearance is deceptive. A vase does not make us believe in anything but a vase. A building does not pretend to be a tree or a rocking-horse. Nevertheless, in so far as the vase or the building is a work of art, it stands before us as an image, because it addresses itself so forcibly to our vision that this appeal makes all its practical properties and relations irrelevant; and in receiving it as a completely visual thing we abstract its appearance from its material existence. It does not need to fool us. It only has to dissociate itself from the actual world (the world of our actions), and present a coherent and entirely perceptual form to become, for the beholder, an image.

The word "image" is almost inseparably wedded to the sense of sight because our stock example of it is the looking-glass world that gives us a visible copy of the things opposite the mirror without a tactual or other sensory replica of them. But some of the alternative words that have been used to denote the virtual character of so-called "aesthetic objects" escape this association. Carl Gustav Jung, for instance, speaks of it as "semblance." His exemplary case of illusion is not the reflected image, but the dream; and in a dream there are sounds, smells, feelings, happen-

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ings, intentions, dangers—all sorts of things invisible—as well as sights, and all are equally unreal by the measures of public fact. Dreams do not consist entirely of images, but everything in them is imaginary. The music heard in a dream comes from a virtual piano under the hands of an apparent musician; the whole experience is a semblance of events. It may be as vivid as any reality, yet it is what Schiller called "S*chein*."

Schiller was the first thinker who saw what really makes "S*chein*," or semblance, important for art: the fact that it liberates perception—and with it, the power of conception—from all practical purposes, and lets the mind dwell on the sheer appearance of things. The function of artistic illusion is not "make-believe," as many philosophers and psychologists assume, but the very opposite, disengagement from belief—the contemplation of sensory qualities without their usual meanings of "Here's that chair," "That's my telephone," "These figures ought to add up to the bank's statement," etc. The knowledge that what is before us has no practical significance in the world is what enables us to give attention to its appearance as such.

Everything has an aspect of appearance as well as of causal importance. Even so non-sensuous a thing as a fact or a possibility *appears* this way to one person and that way to another. That is its "semblance," whereby it may "resemble" other things, and—where the semblance is used to mislead judgment about its causal properties—is said to "dissemble" its nature. Where we know that an "object" consists entirely in its semblance, that apart from its appearance it has no cohesion and unity—like a rainbow, or a shadow—we call it a merely virtual object, or an illusion. In this literal sense a picture is an illusion; we see a face, a flower, a vista of sea or land, etc., and know that if we stretched out our hand to it we would touch a surface smeared with paint.

The object seen is given only to the sense of sight. That is the chief purpose of "imitation," or "objective" painting. To present things to sight which are known to be illusion is a ready (though by no means necessary) way to *abstract* visible forms from their usual context.

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Normally, of course, semblance is not misleading; a thing is what it seems. But even where there is no deception, it may happen that an object—a vase, for instance, or a building—arrests one sense so exclusively that it seems to be given to that sense alone, and all its other properties become irrelevant. It is quite honestly there, but is *important* only for (say) its visual character. Then we are prone to accept it as a vision; there is such a concentration on appearance that one has a sense of seeing sheer appearance—that is, a sense of illusion.

Herein lies the "unreality" of art that tinges even perfectly real objects like pots, textiles, and temples. Whether we deal with actual illusions or with such quasi-illusions made by artistic emphasis, what is presented is, in either case, just what Schiller called "*Schein*"; and a pure semblance, or "*Schein*," among the husky substantial realities of the natural world, is a strange guest. Strangeness, separateness, otherness—call it what you will—is its obvious lot.

The semblance of a thing, thus thrown into relief, is its direct aesthetic quality. According to several eminent critics, this is what the artist tries to reveal for its own sake. But the emphasis on quality, or essence, is really only a stage in artistic conception. It is the making of a rarefied element that serves, in its turn, for the making of something else—the imaginal art-work itself. And this form is the non-discursive but articulate symbol of feeling.

Here is, I believe, the clear statement of what Clive Bell dealt with rather confusedly in a passage that identified "significant form" (not, however, significant of anything) with "aesthetic quality." The setting forth of pure quality, or semblance, creates a new dimension, apart from the familiar world. That is its office. In this dimension, all artistic forms are conceived and presented. Since their substance is illusion or "*Schein*" they are, from the standpoint of practical reality, *mere* forms; they exist only for the sense or the imagination that perceives them—like the fata morgana, or the elaborate, improbable structure of events in our dreams. The function of "semblance" is to give forms a new embodiment in purely qualitative, unreal instances, setting them

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free from their normal embodiment in real things so they may be recognized in their own right, and freely conceived and composed in the interest of the artist's ultimate aim—significance, or logical expression.

All forms in art, then, are abstracted forms; their content is only a semblance, a pure appearance, whose function is to make them, too, apparent—more freely and wholly apparent than they could be if they were exemplified in a context of real circumstances and anxious interest. It is in this elementary sense that all art is abstract. Its very substance, quality without practical significance, is an abstraction from material existence; and exemplification in this illusory or quasi-illusory medium makes the forms of things (not only shapes, but logical forms, e.g. proportions among the degrees of importance in events, or among different speeds in motions) present themselves *in abstracto.* This fundamental abstractness belongs just as forcibly to the most illustrative murals and most realistic plays, provided they are good after their kind, as to the deliberate abstractions that are schematic representations or entirely non-representative designs.

But abstract form as such is not an artistic ideal. To carry abstraction as far as possible, and achieve pure form in only the barest conceptual medium is a logician's business, not a painter's or poet's. In art, forms are abstracted only to be made clearly apparent, and are freed from their common uses only to be put to new uses: to act as symbols, to become expressive of human feeling.

An artistic symbol is a much more intricate thing than what we usually think of as a "form," because it involves *all* the relationships of its elements to one another, all similarities and differences of quality, not only geometric or other familiar relations. That is why qualities enter directly into the form itself, not as its contents, but as constitutive elements in it. Our scientific convention of abstracting mathematical forms, which do not involve quality, and fitting them to experience, always

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makes qualitative factors "content"; and as scientific conventions rule our academic thinking, it has usually been taken for granted that in understanding art, too, one should think of form as opposed to qualitative "content." But on this uncritical assumption the whole conception of form and content comes to grief, and analysis ends in the confused assertion that art is "formed content," form and content are one. The solution of that paradox is, that a work of art is a structure whose interrelated elements are often qualities, or properties of qualities such as their degrees of intensity; that qualities enter into the form and in this way are as much one with it as the relations which they, and they only, have; and that to speak of them as "content," from which the form could be abstracted logically, is nonsense. The form is built up out of relations peculiar to them; they are formal elements in the structure, not contents.

Yet forms are either empty abstractions, or they do have a content; and artistic forms have a very special one, namely their *import*. They are logically expressive, or significant, forms. They are symbols for the articulation of feeling, and convey the elusive and yet familiar pattern of sentience. And as essentially symbolic forms they lie in a different dimension from physical objects as such. They belong to the same category as language, though their logical form is a different one, and as myth and dream, though their function is not the same.

Herein lies the "strangeness" or "otherness" that characterizes an artistic object. The form is immediately given to perception, and yet it reaches beyond itself; it is semblance, but seems to be charged with reality. Like speech, that is physically nothing but little buzzing sounds, it is filled with its meaning, and its meaning is a reality. In a "presentational" symbol the symbolic import permeates the whole structure, because every articulation of that structure is an articulation of the idea it conveys; the meaning (or, if that word is to be reserved for the assigned signification characteristic of words, let us say "the import") is the content of the symbolic form, given with it, as it were, to perception.

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A work of art differs from all other beautiful things in that it is "a glass and a transparency"—not, in any relevant way, a *thing* at all, but a symbol. Every good philosopher or critic of art realizes, of course, that *feeling* is somehow expressed in art; but as long as a work of art is viewed primarily as an "arrangement" of sensuous elements for the sake of some inexplicable aesthetic satisfaction, the problem of expressiveness is really an alien issue.

What art expresses is *not* actual feeling, but ideas of feeling; as language does not express actual things and events but ideas of them. Art is expressive through and through—every line, every sound, every gesture; and therefore it is a hundred per cent symbolic. It is not sensuously pleasing and *also* symbolic; the sensuous quality is in the service of its vital import. A work of art is far more symbolic than a word, which can be learned and even employed without any knowledge of its meaning; for a "presentational" symbol *presents* its import directly to any beholder who is sensitive at all to articulated forms in the given medium.

A purely perceptual form, however, must be clearly given and understood before it can convey any import, especially where there is no conventional reference whereby the import is assigned to it as its unequivocal meaning, but the congruence of the symbolic form and the form of some vital experience must be directly perceived by the force of "*Gestalt*" alone. Hence the paramount importance of *abstracting the form*, banning all irrelevancies that might obscure its logic, and especially divesting it of all its usual meanings so it may be open to new ones. The first thing is to estrange it from actuality, to give it "otherness," "self-sufficiency"; this is done by creating a realm of illusion, in which it functions as "*Schein*," mere semblance, free from worldly offices. The second thing is to make it plastic, so it may be manipulated in the interests of expression instead of practical signification. This is achieved by the same means—uncoupling it from practical life, abstracting it as a free perceptual figment. Only such freed forms can be plastic, subject to deliberate torsion, modification, and composition for the sake of expressiveness. And finally,

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it must become "transparent"—which it does when insight into the reality to be expressed, the *Gestalt* of living experience, guides its author in creating it.

"Expression" in the logical sense—presentation of an idea through a formal symbol—is the ruling power and purpose of art. And the symbol is, from first to last, something created. The illusion, which constitutes the work of art, is not a mere arrangement of given materials in an aesthetically pleasing pattern; it is what results from the arrangement, and is literally something the artist makes. It comes with his work and passes away in its destruction.

To produce and sustain the essential illusion, set it off clearly from the surrounding world of actuality, and articulate its form to the point where it coincides unmistakably with forms of feeling and living, is the artist's task. To such ends he uses whatever materials lend themselves to technical treatment—tones, colors, plastic substances, words, gestures, or any other physical means. If we look, first of all, to the plastic arts, we find from the very beginning the making of a semblance, more general and thorough-going than any counterfeiting of objects: the appearance of purely visual space, divorced from the space of actuality, which is largely tactual or even conceptual (geometrically constructed). This is a more fundamental aim than imitation; picturing things is only one way of creating spatial forms for the eye alone, but the semblance of space thus created is involved in any plastic work whatever, from textile patterns to portraits and battle-scenes. The patterns, indeed, have an interest of their own, because their motivation is primarily artistic, whereas representative forms hide their true credentials under the cloak of another office.

In all folk art, savage or civilized, there is a heritage of purely decorative forms, two-dimensional, clear in outline, either in two tones, or painted with simple, solid colors that fill the outlined shapes. The immediate effect of such devices is to simplify perceptual space by reducing it to only two dimensions. This sim-

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plification is the primary education of artistic vision; it achieves the abstraction of visual space from the confused actual realm by making the plane surface paramount. The aim of decoration is to deploy definite forms and colors in such a way that the eye is "satisfied," i.e. that it accepts the established two-dimensional space as sufficient and has no tendency to go beyond it. The flowing lines, complementary areas clearly divided, and contrasting, pure colors that are typical of decorative art all serve this main purpose.

Decoration is, above all, an invitation to *pure seeing*.[2] It is, therefore, a natural preparation for drawing and painting, which—despite all common factors—are something different. For graphic ornamentation aims merely to simplify, and thus abstract, the visual character of space, by projecting vision fully and freely in two dimensions; but genuine pictorial art seeks to fill the illusory realm with expressive forms, symbols of vital feeling, and often finds itself pushed far beyond the elementary stages of space creation.

Yet even in the motifs of pure decoration—zigzags and S-curves, parallels and spirals and loops—we find the basic principles of expressiveness, forms that seem to "have life" not because they represent anything living, but because they symbolize directly the *sense of life*, which underlies all our feelings. In a little book on design[3] I find the following statement, made by the artist-author with perfectly literal intent and evidently no consciousness whatever of using metaphor: "Borders must move forward, and grow as they move."

Now, what does it mean to say a border *moves?* The border is a mark on a contrasting ground, perfectly stationary. When we draw it, the pencil moves, the line or series of forms actually grows in one direction. But suppose it is not even made in this fashion; suppose it is made all at once, by block-printing. And perhaps we do not see it made at all. Still the border "runs" along the

[2]Cf. Albert Barnes: "The appeal of . . . decorative beauty is probably to be explained by its satisfaction of our general need of perceiving freely and agreeably." (*The Art in Painting*, p. 29).

[3]Adolfo Best-Maugard, *A Method for Creative Design.*

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edge of the tablecloth or around the margins of a page. If it is supported by short tangential lines the apparent movement is very much enhanced.

There are, of course, classical explanations of this phenomenon in terms of eye-movements: the eye, it is said, is "carried" along a line as it is in following a moving object, such as a mouse running across the floor, and the association of our eye-movement with moving objects prompts us to impute movement to the line. It is not unlikely that eye-movements do play some part in the illusion, but they do not account for it, for if they were always thus associated we could never appreciate as stationary anything too big to be seen at the focal center, i.e. without moving the eyes. Everything else should appear to shift or mill around. Quite to the contrary, however, we are just as likely to think of actual motion in terms of a fixed form. The mouse running across the floor seems to cover a path that remains there, an imaginary line.

The real connection between lines and motion is, I believe, that an uninterrupted line serves us as a *symbol* of motion, and conveys the idea of it exactly as any symbol conveys its message. In the direct, intuitive appreciation of what may be termed "natural symbols,"[4] the import is received like something inherent in the symbol; therefore the running mouse seems to cover a path lying on the floor, and the still, painted line seems to run. The reason is that both exemplify the abstract principle of *direction*, by virtue of which they are logically congruent enough to be symbols for one another; and in the ordinary, intelligent use of vision we let them stand proxy for each other all the time, though we do not know it. This is not a function that is first discursively conceived and then assigned to a possible symbol, but is non-discursively exhibited and perceived long before it is acknowledged in a scientific device (as it is in the language of physics, where vectors are conventionally indicated by arrows). Motion, therefore, is logically related to linear form, and where a line is unbroken, and supporting forms tend to give it direction, the mere perception of it is charged with the idea of motion, which shines

[4]See *Philosophy in a New Key*, Ch. 4.

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through our impression of the actual sense-datum and fuses with it in apperception. The result is a very elementary artistic illusion (not delusion, for, unlike delusion, it survives analysis), which we call "living form."

This term takes us back to Best-Maugard's supposedly simple statement (it is addressed to children!): "Borders should move forward, and grow as they move." What does "grow" mean in this context? The border does not grow bigger in design. No, but it seems to grow longer, for in its seeming motion it does not vacate the places where it was before; like the imaginary path of the mouse, it covers the ground, but continues in one direction; and an ornamental border design appears to do this by a law of its own.

Artistically, all motion is growth; not growth of things or creatures, but of lines and spaces. The spiral—one of the simple motifs—is a "dynamic" or progressing line, but what really seems to grow is a space, the two-dimensional area it defines. This intimate relation between movement and growth is what makes design—the grammar of visual semblance—"living form," in a perfectly intelligible sense. It is also the surest refutation of any theory that reduces the experience of movement in design to motions *connoted* by stimulation of tiny muscular actions in the eye. The term "living form" is justified by a logical connection that exists between a half-illusory datum—the "growing" line or space—and the concept of life, whereby the former is a natural symbol of the latter; for "living form" directly exhibits what is the essence of life—incessant change, or process, articulating a permanent form.

The path of a physical motion is an ideal line. In a line that "has movement," there is ideal motion. In the phenomenon we call "life," both continuous change and permanent form really exist; but the form is made and maintained by a complicated disposition of mutual influences among the physical units (atoms, molecules, then cells, then organs) whereby changes tend always to occur in certain pre-eminent ways. Instead of a simple law of transformation such as one finds in inorganic change, living

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things exist by a cumulative process; they assimilate elements of their surroundings to themselves, and these elements fall under the law of change that is the organic form or "life." This assimilation of factors not originally belonging to the organism, whereby they enter into its life, is the principle of growth. A growing thing need not actually become bigger; since the metabolic action does not stop when a non-living substance has been assimilated and become alive, but is a continuous process of oxidation, separate elements also resign from the organic pattern; they break down again into inorganic structures, i.e. they die. When growth is more vigorous than decay the living form grows larger; when they are balanced it is self-perpetuating; when decay occurs faster than growth the organism is decadent. At a certain point the metabolic process stops all at once, and the life is finished.

Permanence of form, then, is the constant aim of living matter; not the final goal (for it is what finally fails), but the thing that is perpetually being achieved, and that *is* always, at every moment, an achievement, because it depends entirely on the activity of "living." But "living" itself is a process, a continuous change; if it stands still the form disintegrates—for *the permanence is a pattern of changes.*

Nothing, therefore, is as fundamental in the fabric of our feeling as the sense of permanence and change and their intimate unity. What we call "motion" in art is not necessarily change of place, but is *change made perceivable,* i.e. *imaginable,* in any way whatever. Anything that symbolizes change so we seem to behold it is what artists, with more intuition than convention, call a "dynamic" element. It may be a "dynamic accent" in music, physically nothing but loudness, or a word charged above others with emotion, or a color that is "exciting" where it stands, i.e. physically stimulating.

A form that exemplifies permanence, such as a fixed line or a delimited space (the most permanent anchors of vision), yet *symbolizes* motion, carries with it the concept of growth, because growth is the normal operation of those two principles conjoined in mutual dependence. Therefore Best-Maugard's metaphorical

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statement: "Borders should move forward, and grow as they move," is perfectly rational if we consider that, and why, they *seem* to do these things. But why "should" they be drawn to seem like that? Because this illusion, this seeming, is the real symbol of feeling. The elementary pattern of feeling expressed in such world-accepted forms symbolizing "growth" is the *sense of life,* the most primitive "fulfillment"; and it is not mirrored in the physical lines, but in the created thing, the "motions" they have. The dynamic pattern, which is actually an illusion, is what "copies" the form of vital feeling. It is in order to be expressive that borders *should* move and grow.

Very early in the evolution of design we meet the great principle of graphic expression: the possibility of *picturing things.* A simple circle decorated with surrounding secondary forms, half-circles, zigzags, or what-not, immediately yields a flower-shape—fantastic, schematic, but exactly the sort of flower pattern one finds in Persian shawls and French hour-books and on Mexican pots. The astounding thing is that these shapes are so unmistakably flowers. The same convincing representational function gives us birds, beasts, men, moon and stars. The principle of representation serves to organize forms and makes much greater elaboration possible without confusing the eye. The forceful implication in the essentially decorative character of primitive art and folk-art, and in the fact that naturalism grows with sophistication, seems to me to be that graphic representation does not spring from copying of direct visual impressions which are then "composed" into design but, on the contrary, arises from ornamental forms that are seen to have representative powers. It is formulation, shaping, defining of the impressions themselves, and is not copying at all, but symbolizing from the outset. In short, *form is first, and pictorial meaning is read into it.*[5]

---

[5]Leonardo, in his Treatise on Painting, advises students to look at chance forms like cracks in plaster and knots in boards and try to make figures out of them, i.e., to read shapes of people and things into them. This, he says, is very good for the painter's imagination. It sounds silly; but was Leonardo silly? Or did he also feel that visual "reality" is made out of basic organizing forms, as truly as scientific "reality" is made out of the forms of rational discourse?

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The higher principle of organization, however, becomes dominant as the artist's imagination produces more involved, asymmetrical, and subtle forms, created not only by obvious means like outlines and pure colors, but also by illusions of receding space and the orientation of units of design toward each other. The interpretation of such units as forms of objects is an inestimable aid in the creation of new spatial relationships, in distributing centers of interest and composing them into a visual unity. For centuries art evolved mainly on representational guidelines; and, as in decorative design we speak of zigzags and circles as "motifs," so now we apply "motif" to what is pictured in the forms.

But no matter how many possibilities are opened to the artistic imagination by the power of representing things, imitation is is never the main device in organization. The primary interest is always design, and the very measure of an artist is his instinct for transforming his actual perceptions into wholly plastic elements as he works with them. As we pass from the study of naive design to a more ambitious literature of aesthetics, dealing with the highest art-forms, we meet almost at once the same fundamental principle—the primacy of form. Adolf Hildebrand, for instance, in the first paragraphs of his brief but significant book, *The Problem of Form in Painting and Sculpture*, distinguishes between natural perception and artistic, or, as he calls it, "architectonic" perception, which "enables us to realize a unity of form lacking in objects themselves as they appear in Nature." What he calls the "architectonic process" is the transformation of natural appearances into pictorial ones, or *design* in a broad sense; and this process is as old as art itself.

"Reviewing the artistic production of earlier times," he says, "we find that the architectonic structure of a work of art stands out everywhere as the paramount factor, whereas mere imitation is a thing which has only gradually developed. It is, in fact, instinctive with us to combine the piece-work of perception into an ideal whole."

The great difference between the common form of perception and the "architectonic" or artistic is that the former is a product of all our senses working together, and aided, furthermore, by

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memory and inference, whereas the latter must be achieved solely by one organ, the eye. If we want to make a semblance that shall address itself to sight alone we must, therefore, have *visual substitutes* for everything that other kinds of experience usually supply. The "architectonic process," then, is *the construction and ordering of forms in space in such a way that they define and organize the space.* But a perceptually defined space is a shape: so the complete shaping of a given visual field is a work of pictorial art. Design, therefore, is the essence of drawing and painting, and as simple decorative forms are its lowest terms, composition in color and depth is its highest evolution. For the true aim of plastic art, as Hildebrand conceives it, is *to make space visible, and its unity and continuity sensible.*

Here we seem, however, to encounter a philosophical difficulty; for space, as we know it in the practical world, has no shape. Even in science it has none, though it has "form." There are spatial relations, but there is no concrete totality of space. Space itself is amorphous in our active lives and purely abstract in scientific thought. It is a substrate of all our experience, but it is never an entity. How, then, can it be "organized," "shaped," or "articulated"? We meet all these terms in the most serious literature of aesthetics.

The answer is, I think, that the space in which we live and act is not what is treated in art at all. The harmoniously organized space in a picture is not experiential space, known by sight and touch, by free motion and restraint, far and near sounds, voices lost or re-echoed. It is an entirely visual affair; for touch and hearing and muscular action it does not exist. For them there is a flat canvas, relatively small, or a cool blank wall, where for the eye there is deep space full of shapes. This purely visual space is an illusion, for our sensory experiences do not agree on it in their report. Pictorial space is not only organized by means of color (including black and white and the gamut of grays between them), it is created; without the organizing shapes it is simply not there. Like the space "behind" the surface of a mirror, it is

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what the physicists call "virtual space":—an intangible image.

This virtual space is the primary illusion of all plastic art. Every element of design, every use of color and semblance of shape, serves to produce and support and develop the picture-space that exists for vision alone. Being only visual, this space has no continuity with the space in which we live; it is limited by the frame, or by surrounding blanks, or incongruous other things that cut it off. Yet its limits cannot even be said to *divide* it from practical space; for a boundary that divides things always connects them as well, and between the picture space and any other space there is no connection. The created virtual space is entirely self-contained and independent.

This is the fundamental reason why everything that is relevant and artistically valid in a picture must be visual, and everything visual serves "architectonic" purposes. In the virtual space of a picture there are only images, and if these are to symbolize objects of our actual world we must have imaginal equivalents for the things that are normally known by touch, movement or inference. That is why a direct copy of what we see is not enough. The copy of things seen would need the same supplementation from non-visual sources that the original perception demanded. The visual substitutes for the non-visible ingredients in space experience make the great difference between photographic rendering and creative rendering; the latter is necessarily a departure from direct imitation, because it is a construction of spatial entities out of color alone (perhaps only varying shades of one color), by all sorts of devices, in order to present at once, with complete authority, the primary illusion of a perfectly visible and perfectly intelligible total space.

Virtual space—the primary illusion of pictorial art—is a creation, not a recreation. There are no natural objects in it, but only semblances, which characterize it and make it an articulate total shape, free from all practical functions, and therefore capable of functioning as a symbol. There are no degrees of illusoriness or expressiveness among different art-genders, but only de-

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grees of achievement among individual works. From the first line of decorative drawing to the works of Raphael, Leonardo, or Rivera, the same principle of pictorial art is wholly exemplified: the creation of virtual space, and its organization by forms (be they lines, or volumes, or intersecting planes, or shadows and lights) that reflect the patterns of sentience and emotion. The picture-space, whether conceived in two dimensions or in three, dissociates itself from the actual space in which the canvas or other physical bearer of it exists; its function as a symbol makes the objects in a picture as unlike normal physical objects as a spoken word is unlike the sounds of footsteps, rustlings, clatter and other noises that usually accompany and sometimes drown it. The faint little sound of a speaking voice arrests the ear in midst of the medley of mechanical sounds and is something altogether different, because its significance is of a different order; similarly the space in a picture engages our vision completely because it is significant in itself and not as part of the surrounding room. Just establish one line in virtual space, and at once we are in the realm of symbolic forms. The mental shift is as definite as that which we make from hearing a sound of tapping, squeaking, or buzzing to hearing speech, when suddenly in midst of the little noises surrounding us we make out a single word. The whole character of our hearing is transformed. The medley of physical sound disappears, the ear receives language, perhaps indistinct by reason of interfering noises, but struggling through them like a living thing. Exactly the same sort of reorientation is effected for sight by the creation of any purely visual space. The image, be it a representation or a mere design, stands before us in its expressiveness: significant form.

The primary illusion of any art-gender is the basic creation wherein all its elements exist; and they, in turn, produce and support it. It does not exist by itself; "primary" does not mean first-established, but *always* established where any elements are given at all. There are numberless ways of *making space visible*, i.e. virtually presenting it.

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What are the "elements" of a work of art?

Elements are factors in the semblance; and as such they are virtual themselves, direct components of the total form. In this they differ from materials, which are actual. Paints are materials, and so are the colors they have in the tube or on the palette; but the colors in a picture are elements, determined by their environment. They are warm or cold, rich or frugal, they advance or recede, enhance or soften or dominate other colors; they create tensions and distribute weight in a picture. Colors in a paintbox don't do such things. They are materials, and lie side by side in their actual, undialectical materialism.

Choice of materials may, to be sure, affect the range of available elements. One can not always do the same things with diverse materials. The translucency of glass allows the making and use of special color elements that paint on a wooden ground could never create; therefore glass painting and wood painting set the artist different problems and suggest different ideas to be brought to expression. It is sometimes said that glass and wood have "different feelings." They permit, and even command, quite distinct forms, and perhaps equally distinct ranges of vital import.

All the discernible elements in a picture (that is, the factors analysis may reveal) are *secondary illusions*. They support the primary illusion, which is invariant, while the forms that articulate it may vary indefinitely. The primary illusion is a substrate of the realm of virtual forms; it is involved in their occurrence.

The whole problem of the unity and diversity of the arts hinges, I believe, on this concept of illusion, or created form. The deepest distinction among them is that of having different primary illusions; this distinction obtains, for instance, between the visual arts and music, or between music and literature. Between painting, sculpture and architecture the distinction is less radical, for it rests only on a difference among *modes* of virtual space. With a really potent principle of analysis one need not defend the unity of art by belittling or denying the fact that there are several major art-forms, and insisting that between music and

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sculpture there is no "real" difference. The method here used is to push all differences as far as they will go. There is a definite point where, suddenly, no important distinctions can be made any more. Everything we can say of any one art, on that level, holds for all. *There is the unity.* Knowing this, I shall set forth in a subsequent essay what gives the muses their individuality, and let their family solidarity take care of itself.

(THE HUDSON REVIEW *will publish a second related essay by Mrs. Langer, "The Primary Illusions and the Great Orders of Art," in an early issue.*)

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Four Poems

W. S. MERWIN

CAROL

On vague hills the prophet bird
Chants now the night is drained;
What was the stem this night stirred
And root from the winter ground?

Lord, Lord, and no night remained,
But heaven only, whence comes
Light such as no sun contained,
And the earth shook, and our limbs.

By song we were brought to stand
By that flower where frail our eyes
Strayed among beasts and found
Dim kings dreaming on their knees.

Lord, Lord, and earth's hours were torn
To dreams and we beheld there
On that silence newly born
Heaven's light in the still flower.

From such a quiet wakened,
After the vision has burned
On such birth, to what end
Have dew and hours returned?

Lord, Lord, and what remember
We of dreams when the day comes,
And the loud bird laughs on wonder
And white sheep lying like tombs?

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We who are flesh have no word
And distraction is our music,
Who on the anxious night heard
Peace over our voices break.

SUSPICOR SPECULUM

—to Sisyphus

Seeing, where the rock falls blind, this figure
At whispers swaying the drained countenance,
As might a shadow stand I have stayed an hour
To no sound but his persistent sibilance
Aghast, as should the populous dreaming head
See evils colder than the brain yet burn,
Or swift and tomorrow the enormous dead
Scatter their pose and, Sisyphus, return.
Patience betrays and the time speaks nothing. Come,
Pursed in the indigent small dark confess:
Is mine this shade that, to all hours the same,
Lurches and fails, marine and garrulous,
A vain myth in the winter of his sense,
Capable neither of song nor silence?

ODE

. . . the Medusa face of this life . . .
(Henry James)

When did I pass the pole where I deprived
Three hags of their one eye, then staring seized
The total of their dark
And took their answer?
For that way I came, though the eye forgets:
Now tall over the breathless shore this day
Lifts on one equal glare
The crass and curling face.
I cannot tell if the stone has fallen
Or healed me, clotting time, so that I stand

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Dead. If the heart yet moves
What shield were faithful found,
What weapon? I stand as in sloth of stone
Amazed, for a maimed piece of one's own death,
Should that lithe hair stiffen,
Were the shape of her fall.

SONG

We were as mirrors where desire
Traded at night conceits of fire,
As gardened minds whose delicacy
Could neither close with flesh nor flee,

Who watched by fire a bush inflect
What flame a window could reflect
Where dark and distance were control
So the leaves burned yet rested whole.

But flesh, dark forest to the mind,
Caught at our breaths repeated wind
And at our eyes an equal glare:
Our distance broke and burned us there.

In married dark these fevers learn
Alternate loss; the bodies, worn
Indefinite, attend together
Night's pleasure and the press of weather.

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Literature

PAUL VALÉRY

BOOKS HAVE the same enemies as man: fire, dampness, beasts, time, and their own contents.

*

Stark naked thoughts and emotions are as weak as stark naked men. Therefore, they must be clothed.

*

Thought is of both sexes: fertilizes itself and propagates itself.

*

Preamble

The existence of poetry is essentially deniable; which the intimate temptations of pride can exploit.—On this point it resembles God himself.

One can be deaf to it, blind to Him—the consequences are indiscernible.

But what everyone can deny and yet what we wish to exist becomes the center and potent symbol of our *raison d'être*.

*

A poem ought to be a feast of the Intellect. It cannot be anything else.

Feast; that is: a game, but solemn, supervised, significant; image of what one ordinarily is not, of the state in which efforts are rhythms, redeemed.

One celebrates something in fulfilling it or representing it in its purest and most beautiful state.

Here we have the faculty of language, and its *inverse phenomenon*, the comprehension, the identity of things that it separates. Its miseries, its weaknesses, its everydayness are banished. All the *possibility* of language is organized.

The feast over, nothing ought to remain. Ashes, trampled garlands.

*

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In the poet:
The ear speaks,
The mouth listens;
It is the intelligence, the awakened being, that begets and dreams;
It is sleep that sees clearly;
It is the image and the phantasm that look;
It is the lack and the lacuna that create.

*

Most men have such a vague idea of poetry that that very vagueness of their idea is to them the definition of poetry.

*

POETRY

Is the attempt to represent, or to restore, by means of articulate language, *those things* or *that thing,* which cries, tears, caresses, kisses, sighs, try obscurely to express, and which *the objects seem to wish to express* in whatever appearance of life or supposed design that they have.

This thing is not definable otherwise. It is of the nature of that energy that expends itself in responding to that which is . . .

*

Thought ought to be concealed in verse like the nutritive virtue in a fruit. A fruit is nourishment, but it seems only a delight. We perceive only pleasure, but we receive a substance. Enchantment veils this imperceptible nourishment that it brings.

*

Poetry is only literature reduced to the essence of its active principle. It has been purged of *idols* of every kind and of realistic illusions; of the possible ambiguity between the language of "truth" and the language of "creation," etc.

And this quasi-creative, fictitious role of language (itself of practical and veridical origin) is made as evident as possible by the fragility or the arbitrariness of the *subject.*

*

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The *subject* of a poem is as alien to it and as important as is to a man his *name*.

*

Some, even poets, and good poets, see in poetry an arbitrary deluxe occupation, a special industry that is able to be or not to be, to flourish or to perish. One could suppress perfumers, dealers in spirits, etc.

Others see in it the phenomenon of a very essential property or activity, linked profoundly to the situation of the intimate being between knowledge, duration, hidden troubles and allotments, memory, dreams, etc.

*

While the interest of prose writings is, as it were, outside of them and born from the consummation of the text, the interest of poems does not quit them nor can it stray.

*

Poetry is a survival.

Poetry, in a period of simplification of language, of alteration of forms, of insensitiveness to them, of specialization—is a *thing preserved*. I mean that one would not invent verse today. Nor for that matter rites of any kind.

*

The poet is, moreover, he who seeks the intelligible and imaginable system, in the expression of which a lovely accident of language would form a part: such word, such harmony of words, such movement of syntax—such entrance—as he encountered, awakened, jostled by chance, and noticed—through his nature as poet.

*

Lyricism is the development of an exclamation.

*

Lyricism is the kind of poetry that supposes the *voice in action* —the voice directly issued from, or provoked by—the things that one sees and that one feels to be *present*.

*

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It so happens that the mind demands poetry, or the outgrowth of poetry, from some hidden spring or divinity.

But the ear demands a certain sound while the mind demands a certain word the sound of which is not suitable to the desire of the ear.

*

For a long, long time the *human voice* was the basis and condition of *literature*. The presence of the voice explains the first literature, from which the classic took its shape and that admirable *temperament*. The whole human body *under the voice,* support and condition of the *idea's* equilibrium . . .

A day arrived when it became known how to read with the eyes without spelling, without hearing, and literature was completely altered.

Evolution from the articulate to the skimmed—from the scanned and linked to the instantaneous—from what a listener supports and demands to what an eye, rapid, avid, free across a page supports and carries off.

*

VOICE—POETRY

The qualities that can be enunciated by a human voice are the same that ought to be studied and *given* in poetry.

And the "magnetism" of the voice ought to be transposed into the mysterious and extra-precise alliance of ideas or of words.

The continuity of the lovely sound is essential.

*

The idea of *Inspiration* contains the following ones: *What costs nothing is what has the greatest value.*

What has the greatest value ought to cost nothing.

And this one: *To glory in that for which one is the least responsible.*

*

At the least erasure the principle of total inspiration is ruined—the intelligence effaces what the god has imprudently *created.* Therefore, he must be given a share in it at the risk of producing

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monsters. But who will do the sharing? If it is the intelligence, she, therefore, is queen: if it is not she, will it, then, be a stone-blind power?

*

This great poet is only a brain full of mistakes. Some turn out well for him and perform the strange leaps of genius. Others, which do not differ from those, seem just what they are, follies and sports of chance: this is when he wishes to ponder the first and make something of them.

*

How shameful to write without knowing the meaning of language, word, metaphors, changes of ideas and tone; without conceiving of the *structure* of the work's duration, or the conditions of its end; hardly the why, and not at all the how! To blush for being the Pythia . . .

*

RHETORIC

Ancient rhetoric regarded as ornaments and artifices those figures and those relations that the successive refinements of poetry have at last made known as the essence of its object; and which the advances of analysis will one day discover as effects of profound properties, or of what could be named: *formal sensibility*.

*

Two kinds of verse: *given* verse and *calculated* verse.

Calculated verse is the one that presents itself necessarily in the form of *problems to resolve*—and which has for initial conditions, first, the given verse, and then the rhyme, the syntax, the meaning already engaged by these data.

*

We are always, even in prose, led and constrained to write that which we did not wish to write and what that which we were wishing to write itself wishes.

*

Verse. The vague idea, the intention, the many-imaged impulsion breaking on the regular forms, on the invincible defenses

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of conventional prosody, engenders new things and unexpected figures. There are astonishing consequences from this shock of the will and of feeling against the insensibility of conventions.

*

Rhyme has this great success—of infuriating the simple folk who naively believe that there is something under the heavens more important than a convention. They have the naive belief that some thought *can* be more profound, more durable . . . than any convention whatsoever. . . .

That is not the least charm of rhyme, nor because of that does it caress the ear any the less sweetly.

*

Rhyme constitutes a law independent of the subject and is comparable to an external clockwork.

*

The abuse, the multiplicity of images produces in the mind's eye a disorder incompatible with the *tone*. The dazzle equalizes everything.

*

To construct a poem that contains only poetry is impossible.

If a piece contains only *poetry,* it is not constructed; it is not a *poem.*

*

Fantasy, if it is strengthened and lasts a little while, forges for itself organs, principles, laws, forms, etc., the means of prolonging itself and making sure of itself. The improvisation is concerted, the impromptu is organized, for nothing can remain, nothing be affirmed and traverse the instant if it does not produce what it must to add one instant to another.

*

Dignity of verse: one single word that fails obstructs all.

*

A certain disturbance of the memory produces a word that is not the right one, but which becomes at once the best. This word founds a school, this disturbance becomes a system, superstition, etc. . . .

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A happy correction, an impromptu solution, discloses itself—thanks to a sudden glance at the discontented and abandoned page.

Everything awakes. One had been badly entangled. Everything grows green once more.

The new solution disentangles an important word, releases it—as in chess one move frees this bishop or that pawn that is now going to be able to assert its strength.

Without this glance, the work was not.

Upon this glance, it is at once.

*

A work whose completion—the judgment that declares it completed—is only subordinate to the condition that it please us, is never completed. There is an essential instability in the judgment that compares the last state to the final, the novissimum to the ultimum. The standard of comparison is inconstant.

*

A thing succeeded is a transformation of a thing failed.

Therefore, a thing failed is failed only because abandoned.

*

WITH RESPECT TO THE AUTHOR. VARIANTS.

A poem is never finished—it is always an accident that terminates it, that is to say, that gives it to the public.

It is lassitude, the demand of the publisher—the sprouting of another poem.

But never does the state itself of the work (if the author is not a fool) prove that it could not be developed, changed, considered as first approximation, or origin of a new research.

I myself conceive that the same subject and almost the same words could be taken up indefinitely and could occupy a whole lifetime.

*

"Perfection" is *labor.*

*

If one pictured to oneself all the researches that the creation or the adoption of a *form* involves, one would never oppose it stupidly to ***matter.***

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One is led to *Form* by the anxiety to give the reader the least part that he can—and also to give oneself the least uncertainty and arbitrariness possible.

A bad form is a form that we feel the need of changing and that we change of ourselves; a form is good that we repeat and imitate without being able to modify felicitously.

Form is essentially linked to *repetition.*

The idol of the new is therefore contrary to the concern for *form.*

*

Good and true rules.

Good rules are those that recall and impose the characters of the best moments. They are drawn from the analysis of these favored moments.

They are rules for the author, much more than for the work.

*

If you always have *taste,* then you have never risked very far into yourself.

If you have not any, then you have risked without profit.

*

All the parts of a work ought "to work."

The parts of a work ought to be bound together by more than one thread.

*

Theorem

When works are very short, the effect of the slenderest detail is of the same order of greatness as the effect of the whole.

*

Prose is the writing that has an aim expressible by another writing.

*

ADVICE TO THE WRITER

Between two words you must choose the lesser.

(But may the philosopher also hear this little advice.)

*

Our language is so bizarre that it reduces us either to making a mistake, or to seeking other turns to avoid the hideous conse-

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quences of the application of rules. Imperfect of the subjunctive.

*

Writers. Those for whom a sentence is not an unconscious act, like the mastication and the deglutition of a man in a hurry who does not feel what he is eating.

*

The memory is judge of the writer. It ought to feel if its man conceives and sets *forgettable* forms; and warn him. Tell him: Don't stop at this one; I feel that I won't retain it.

*

In a very beautiful style the sentence is designed, the intention is divined, things remain spiritual.

In some way, the word remains pure like light regardless of what it traverses and touches. It leaves calculable shadows. It does not lose itself in the colors that it calls forth.

*

"*And my verse, rightly or WRONGLY, ALWAYS says something.*"

There is the principle and the germ of an infinity of horrors.

RIGHTLY or *WRONGLY*—what indifference!

SOMETHING—what presumption!

Racine writes to Boileau on the Second Canticle, and discusses the use of Miserable Ones, instead of Unfortunate Ones.

These minutiae that make the beautiful and are the atom of the pure have disappeared indeed from the concern of literature.

*

LA SERVANTE AU GRAND COEUR.

THE GREAT-HEARTED SERVANT-GIRL

This famous line that contains a whole novel of Balzac's in its twelve syllables—someone has gone so far as to explain it by a domestic anecdote!

The truth is simpler. To a poet it is evident—it is that this line *came* to Baudelaire, and it was born with its air of sentimental romance—of foolish and touching reproach.

And Baudelaire went on from there. He buried the cook in a

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grass-plot, which is against custom, but according to rhyme, etc.

*

PHILOSOPHICAL POETRY

"I love the majesty of human sufferings." (Vigny). This line is not for reflection. Human sufferings have no majesty. Therefore this line must not be *reflected upon.*

And yet it is a *beautiful line,* for "majesty" and "sufferings" form a beautiful *harmony* of two *important* words.

Tenesmus, violent toothaches, anxiety, the prostration of the desperate have nothing great, nothing august about them. The sense of this beautiful line is impossible.

Nonsense, therefore, can have a magnificent resonance.

Likewise, in Hugo:

"A frightful black sun from which irradiates the night."

Impossible to think, this *negative* is admirable.

*

The critic ought not to be a reader, but the witness of a reader, one who watches him reading and being moved. The chief critical operation is the ascertainment of the reader. Criticism pays too much attention to the author. Its usefulness, its positive function could be expressed by advice in the following form: *I advise persons of such disposition and such humor to read such and such book.*

*

A work is a *section* of an internal development cut off by the act that hands it over to the public, or the act of judging it *finished.* The critic ought to judge *this act* and not the work. So, the magistrate does not judge the murder itself or the theft committed, but he judges the state of one whose guilty reveries had to be suddenly interrupted and discharged in a criminal action. He appreciates the resistance of a certain *threshold of consciousness.*

*

When the work has appeared, its interpretation by the author has no more validity than any other by anyone else. If I made Pierre's portrait, and if someone finds that my work resembles

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Jacques more than Pierre, I can oppose nothing to it—and his assertion is worth mine. My intention is only my intention and the work is the work.

*

The object of a true critic should be to discover what problem the author (without knowing it, or knowing it) has posed to himself, and to see if he has solved it or not.

*

All that we can reproach an author for is for having declared himself satisfied when we do not believe that we would have been ourselves. We must praise him then when we discover through some document that he was not content with a state that would have satisfied us.

*

For the Gallery

Insults are for the gallery.

*

Clarity

"Open that door." This is a clear sentence—but if it is addressed to us in the open country we no longer understand it. If, however, it is in a figurative sense, it can be understood.

Now, these conditions, so variable, the mind of a listener *adds them or not,* is capable or not of *furnishing* them.

*

Et Caetera. Et Caetera.

Mallarmé did not like this locution, this gesture that eliminates useless infinity. He proscribed it. I, who delighted in it, was astonished.

The mind has no more specific answer. It is the mind itself that this locution makes intervene.

No Etc. in nature, which is enumeration total and pitiless. Total enumeration.—The part for the whole does not exist in nature. —The mind does not tolerate repetition.

It seems made for the singular. Once for all. As soon as it perceives law, monotony, recurrence, it decamps.

*

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If readers were not passive, but were active, and themselves, literature would change quickly in aspect and would lean towards . . . The active reader makes experiments on books—he attempts transpositions.

*

It happens that on many subjects men understand much more amongst themselves than they understand *themselves*. The same words, obscure for the solitary man who loses himself in their "meanings," are clear from one to another.

*

A work is all the more *clear* the more it contains of things that the reader might have formed himself without effort and without thought.

*

What pleases much has statistical traits. Its average qualities.

*

The lowest type is the one that exacts from us the least effort.

*

To Please

Think of what is necessary to please three million readers.

Paradox: Less is needed than to please only one hundred people *exclusively*.

—But he who pleases the millions always pleases himself, and he who pleases only the few generally displeases himself.

*

When one doctrine is attacked by another, we must always tell ourselves that if the old one were still unknown and the recent one in possession, the old would have all the charms of the young one.

Perukes were once downy hair and prodigious novelty.

Whoever would invent the alexandrine in a literary world in which the verse had always been *free,* would pass for mad and would then win over the revolutionaries.

To say that one has invented "nature" and even "life"! They have been invented numerous times and in numerous ways. . . .

Everything comes back, like skirts and hats.

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Surprise, object of art? But we are often wrong about the kind of surprise that is worthy of art. There must be no finite surprises that consist of the unexpected alone; but infinite surprises that have to be obtained by a constantly renascent disposition, and against which all the expectation in the world cannot prevail. The beautiful surprises not by a lack of prepared adaptation, but, on the contrary, by such an adaptation that we cannot discover by ourselves from what to make and conceive one as perfect.

*

The new is, by definition, the perishable part of things. The danger of the new is that it ceases to be automatically, and that it ends, a pure loss. Like youth and life.

To try to oppose this loss is, therefore, to act *against* the new.

Therefore, to seek the new as an artist is either to seek indeed to disappear; or to seek in the name of the new something entirely different, and to yield to a mistake.

*

The new has irresistible attractions only for those minds that demand from simple change their maximum excitement.

*

What is the best in the *new* is what responds to an *old* desire.

*

The strangest experiments, the attempt to live in all the psychological latitudes, at all the degrees of sensibility, finally have this effect: of bringing us back to the *paternal home,* to the customs that, because of their antiquity, had seemed strange, to the rules that had lost their reason; to understand at last these too familiar mysteries, and to find in them reasons, charms, profundities, a new habitableness—as if they were rejuvenated by the perspective that they took on in the distance.

There is eternal conflict between the things produced by accumulation, by the centuries, by the collaboration of many men, circumstances, times, on the one hand; and the man who is born after them, who comes along and bumps against those things that he might not have invented—for no one in particular did invent them.

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The work and its duration

Every great man entertains the illusion that he can prescribe something to the future; that is what is called, *to endure.*

But time is a rebel, and if someone seems to resist it, if some work floats and fluctuates and is not properly swallowed up, you will always find that it is a quite different work from the one that its author had thought he was leaving.

The work lasts in so far as it is capable of appearing entirely different from what its author had made it.

It lasts to be transformed, and for as much as it is capable of a thousand transformations and interpretations.

Or, indeed, it is because it comports a quality independent of its author, not created by him but by his period or his nation, and which takes on value through the change of period or nation.

*

The duration of works is that of their usefulness.

That is why it is discontinuous. There are centuries during which Virgil is of no use at all.

But all that was, and that has not perished, has its chances of living again. We have *need* of an example, of an argument, a precedent, a pretext.

And thereupon some dead book stirs and speaks once more.

*

The best work is the one that guards its secret the longest.

For a long time its secret is not even suspected.

*

In the arts and sciences there are *Stepping-stones.*

Sometimes they are "eccentrics" who have glimpsed, but have not seized or mastered, their hopes. They have only submitted to the flashes of their hope.

Sometimes they are patient people, fanatics who have accumulated the materials and then expired atop the heap, on which someone else comes to pounce and flap his wings.

There where I have arrived after much toil, at the end of my breath, another suddenly appears, fresh and full of freedom, who seizes the *idea,* detaches it from my fatigue and from my doubts,

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looks at it in its generality, its lightness, juggles with it, makes of it an instrument and an ornament, unaware of the hardship and the blood it cost.

*

We use as free gifts a thousand things that have been bought with human lives, pearls for which the diver vomited blood, books rescued from the pyre.

*

The imitation that one makes of it strips a work of the imitable.

*

Classicism

To the ancients the celestial world seemed better organized than it seems to us, and, therefore, totally distinct from ours; and in the relations of these worlds they conceived of no reciprocity at all.

The terrestial world seemed to them very slightly regulated.

What struck them was the luck, the *freedom,* the caprice (for luck is the freedom of things, the impression we have of the plurality and the indifference of solutions).

The Fatum was a vague something, which won out undoubtedly in the end and on the whole (like the law of great numbers), but prayers, sacrifices, practices were possible.

Man still had some power in the occurrences where his direct action is inapplicable.

And so, *to put in order* seemed to him *divine.*

What distinguishes Greek art from Oriental art is that the latter is only concerned with giving pleasure, the Greek seeking to rejoin *beauty,* that is to say, to give things a form that might suggest universal order, divine wisdom, domination by the intellect, all things that do not exist in immediate nature, tangible, given, entirely made of *accidents.*

*

Variations on the classic

A classical writer is a writer who dissimulates or reabsorbs the association of ideas.

*

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Classics

Thanks to bizarre rules, in classical French poetry the distance between the initial "*thought*" and the final "*expression*" is the greatest possible. This is of consequence. A work is situated between the *emotion* received, or the *intention* conceived, and the achievement of the *machine* that will restore it, or will restore a similar *affection*. All is redesigned; thought taken up again.

Add to this that the men who have carried this poetry to its highest point were all *translators*. Skilled in transporting the ancients into our language.

Their poetry is marked by these habits. It is a translation, an *unfaithful belle*—unfaithful to what is not in accord with the exigencies of a pure language.

*

Another definition of classicism—no more arbitrary.

An art is classical if it is adapted not so much to individuals as to a society organized and well-defined (in respect to manners).

Marriage in France was a classical thing;—it still is a little.

It was arranged just as in a comedy from the repertory. There were set roles. The drama began by an encounter fortuitous and contrived. *Is that You, dear Elise?* . . . The parents consulted through lawyers interposed.

*

We readily mistake as classics writers who said trifling things in immense sentences; others who pronounced with *naturalness* the verities of old women; others who show a vulgar vigor, or a redundance of pleading, or an affectedly exquisite elegance; still others who observe an apparent order overstressed, or rules of the game.

*

Classic and culture—in the proper sense of the word—pruning, grafting, selecting, trimming.

Thus grafting of Greek on French—of Tacitus on Jesuit, of Euripides on Jansenist.

Sudden regressions to the savage fruit.

*

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Starting from romanticism, *singularity* has been imitated, instead of imitating, as of old, *mastery*.

The instinct of imitation has remained the same. But the modern adds a contradiction to it.

Mastery (the word says so) is to seem to command the means of art, instead of being visibly commanded by them.

The attainment of mastery therefore supposes the habit of thinking or of combining *from the means* and of not thinking of a work except as a function of the means: never approaching a work through an imagined subject or effect, apart from the means.

It proceeds from that, that mastery is sometimes taken by default and conquered by some *eccentric* who, by chance or by gift, creates *new means*—and seems, at first, to bring into the world a new world. But it is still never a question of anything else but means.

*

The classical theater bare of description. Is it *natural* for a character to have the picturesque at his lips?

A character ought to see only what is necessary and sufficient for him to see for the action—and that indeed is what most men do *see*. Thus the classics are justified and confirmed by observation. The average man is abstracted, that is to say, he limits himself (in his own eyes and the eyes of his like) to his preoccupation of the moment. He perceives only what is connected with it.

*

Between classic and romantic the difference is quite simple: it is one that interposes a craft between him who is ignorant of it and him who has learned it. A romantic who has learned his art becomes a classic. That is why romanticism has ended with Parnassus.

*

These are profoundly different things: to have "genius" and to create a viable work. All the raptures of the world create only *discrete* elements.

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Without a rather exact calculation the work is no good—it does not *go*. An excellent poem implies a crowd of precise reasonings. Question not so much of *forces*, as of application of forces. And to whom applied?

*

The true lovers of a work are those that in considering it in itself and in themselves spend as much desire and time as went into the making of it. But more *interested* still, those that fear it and flee it.

*

A work is made of a multitude of "minds" and events (ancestors, states, chances, earlier writers, etc.) under the direction of the Author.

The latter, therefore, ought to be a profound politician engaged in bringing into accord these larvae and these rival intellectual actions. He must use cunning here; and there, proceed directly; he must delay, refuse access, entreat to come, interest in his work. —Evocations, conjurations, seductions—we have, in respect to our personal and internal matériel, only resources of a magic and symbolic order. Direct will-power is useless; it has no control over the chances of that order, to which chances must be opposed some power as unforeseen, as vital and as variable as they.

*

The theories of an artist always seduce him into loving what he does not love and into not loving what he does love.

*

Literature oscillates between amusement, instruction, preaching or propaganda, the exercising of oneself, the exciting of others.

We say of a book that it is "full of life" when it is as disordered as life seen from the outside appears to be to an accidental observer.

We would say that it is not, if it presented a regularity, symmetries, periodical recurrences like those that appear in the structure and the functions of life methodically observed.

And so whatever is essential to life, whatever supports it, com-

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poses it, begets it or transmits it from one instant to another is (and ought to be) absent from the literary representations of life, and is not only foreign to them, but hostile.

It is remarkable that the conventions of regular poetry, the rhymes, the fixed caesurae, the equal numbers of syllables or feet imitate the monotonous *normal working* of the living body, and proceed perhaps from this mechanism of fundamental functions that repeat the act of living, add element to element of life, and construct a lifetime in the midst of things, as rises above the sea an edifice of coral.

*

Theater

Every play is a *charade*.

*

One of the laws of the theater is that the spectator should always be able to—and ought to—identify himself and merge with someone on the stage. Through this he becomes part of the play, and acts in it—which is what is meant by the expression *of interest*: To be in the affair.

*

It is less a question of rousing men than of taking a hold upon them. Of writers and poets some are comparable to those leaders of riots, to those orators that spring up and in a few moments seem the absolute masters of the people, etc. The others rise to power more slowly and grasp hold of it deep down. They found durable empires.

The first tear up laws, set brains on fire, seize the stormy range of the sky and light it up with conflagrations. The others make the laws.

*

A work of art (or of the mind, in general) is important when its existence determines, summons, suppresses the existence of other works already made or not.

It sensitizes the soul for works entirely different, or it commences, or it terminates, etc.

*

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There is in literature a confusion of works in which we do not distinguish at the very first those that agitate and excite the mind from those that deepen it and organize it. There are works *during which* the mind delights in being far from itself, and others *after which* it delights in finding that it is more itself than ever.

*

Indefinable. Fame does not readily attach to works that the public cannot easily define, that do not fit into a simple category. Furthermore, when this complexity is met with no longer in books but in human character "sympathy" is not aroused for persons who are not resolved into a few epithets.

Our judgments imply this hidden postulate: "Every individual *and* every work can be defined by a small number of epithets." If this number increases, the *existence* of the book or the man is compromised (in the universe of opinion).

*

Literary superstitions

As such I call all beliefs that have in common the neglect of the verbal condition of literature.

For instance, existence and *psychology* of *characters,* those beings *without entrails.*

*

Remark. Immodest daring in the arts (what can be tolerated in public) increases in inverse ratio to the precision of the images. —No love duets in public painting.

In music, everything is permitted.

*

The life of man is comprised between two literary genres. One begins by writing one's desires and ends by writing one's Memoirs.

One takes leave of literature and one returns to it.

I call a beautiful book one that gives me a nobler and profounder idea of language. Likewise the sight of a beautiful body ennobles our idea of life.

This manner of feeling leads to the judging of literature in general and each book in particular according to what they imply or suggest of presence and freedom of mind, of conscious-

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ness, of coordination and of possession of the *universe of words.*

*

The "writer": He always says more and less than he thinks.

He takes from and adds to his thought.

What he finally writes corresponds to no real thought.

It is richer and less rich. Longer and more brief. Clearer and more obscure.

That is why one who wants to reconstruct an author from his work necessarily constructs for himself an imaginary personage.

*

The impressions of a monkey would be of great *literary* value—*today*. And if the monkey signed them with the name of a man, it would be a man of genius.

*

Could a man of profound and pitiless intelligence interest himself in literature? In what aspect? Where would he place it in his mind?

*

To build a little monument to each of one's difficulties. A little temple to each question. One's stele, to each *enigma.*

(*Translated by William Geoffrey*)

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Wit in the Essay on Criticism

WILLIAM EMPSON

I HAVE BEEN trying to build a theory about the way complex meanings are fitted together in a single word, especially the "key word" of a long poem, in which one would expect to find something worth examining. I thus approached the *Essay on Criticism* rather coolly, as a specimen likely to provide crude examples; but I now think that the analysis improves the poem a great deal, and lets us recover the way it was meant to be read. Critics may naturally object that the Augustans did not deal in profound complexities, and tried to make the words as clear-cut as possible. This is so, but it did not stop them from using double meanings intended as clear-cut jokes. The performance inside the word *wit*, I should maintain, was intended to be quite obvious and in the sunlight, and was so for the contemporary reader; that was why he thought the poem so brilliant; but most modern readers do not notice it at all, and that is why they think the poem so dull.

On my theory, a double meaning "A. B." in a word often forms a covert assertion "A = B," called an equation; it is read "A is B" and can be interpreted in various ways, such as "A is like B," "A is part of B," and "A entails B." Thus the order of terms make a difference, and equations are classified according to which way round they go. The equations in Pope, I think, are of the simplest type, as a critic who emphasizes the Augustan simplicity would expect; that is, the subject of the equation is the sense demanded by the immediate context, and the predicate is a "head" meaning of the term which easily pokes itself forward in any context. But to decide what the head meaning was likely to be, for the intended reader, one needs to consider the history of the word. One has also to consider how far the covert assertions are really meant and how far they appear as ironical jokes.

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The word appears on an average every sixteen lines of the *Essay,* and by these frequent uses of it, I should maintain, Pope was in effect building a system on what was almost a slang word; this is already a kind of assertion, that one can think best in the fashionable language of the moment. The covert assertions of the word seem to me to go neatly into formulae, but the effect is comic and somewhat unjust to Pope; the interesting thing is not that the *Essay* asserts the notions but that by seeming to accept them it uses them to imply a hierarchy, and thus puts them in their place. Pope continually plays off different kinds of people so as to make himself look better than either, and in the same way the smart flat little word *wit* seems meant to make Pope himself look something more important. "And are, besides, too moral for a wit," he makes an opponent say of him in the *Satires;* very possibly, we are to feel, but not too moral for a great poet. The personal trick was a useful piece of machinery, but the final effect is less trivial; Pope and his rules are above the wits, but smaller than such poets as can be conceived, even though all poets are called wits. Thus my equations are not supposed to show Pope's final opinions, only the basis of common assumption that he accepted and played upon. The cleverness of the thing is that the epigrams are irrefutable if you stretch the meanings of the words far enough and give what the age demanded if you let them slip back. Yet to play this trick on such a scale comes at last to suggest more dignified notions; that all a critic can do is to suggest a hierarchy with inadequate language; that to do it so well with such very inadequate language is to offer a kind of diagram of how it must always be done.

Whether there are other key words with important tricks ought also to be considered. *Nature* is an obvious candidate, but I think Nature here is simply everything, however diverse, that is outside wit; a source of wit as well as in various ways a contrast to it. *Sense* is an important word, though not used very often; but has not I think much variety of meaning here; its function is to give a solid basis for the convolutions of *wit* above it. That word treats genius with a certain playfulness out of deference

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to the democracy of the polite drawing room, but such a view could only be made plausible if the drawing room were assumed to have a high standard; the strategy of Pope therefore made large demands on the "common sense" which was to be made adequate to the task of criticism. Pope also tries to connect it with the good humor of a reasonable man ("Good humor and good sense must ever join," 523) which gives it another claim as part of the general outlook he thought he was recommending. But I do not think either word is used, as *wit* is, for elaborate byplay.

What is now the most prominent and common meaning of the term, something like "power to make ingenious (and critical) jokes," was I think already the most prominent one for the smart milieu which Pope was addressing. It was more than a century old (e.g. Falstaff says: "I am not only witty in myself, but the cause that wit is in other men") but the prominence was a novelty. Also it is agreed that the special form "a wit" for a man possessing wit had taken on a new meaning some time after the Restoration. I say "agreed" chiefly because it is in the N.E.D., which gives an older use of the form as "9 (trans. from 5) A person of great mental ability" etc. as in the *Sonnets*, "The wits of former days/To subjects worse have given admiring praise," and then "10 (trans. from 7) A person of lively fancy, who has the faculty of saying smart or brilliant things, now always so as to amuse; a witty person," for which the first example is dated 1692. This example and the following Augustan one under the same head both show wits as quarreling with one another. "5" begins "good or great mental capacity" and extends to "acumen," apparently a critical power, whereas "7" begins "quickness of intellect or liveliness of fancy" and includes the Falstaff example. Thus "a wit" for a person possessing the modern "wit" is given as a novelty for Pope, not yet invented when he was born. This seems rather improbable, but I think the great dictionary is right to assume an important change around that date. The sense no doubt became more frequent then, even if not then first introduced, but the reason for what one feels to

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be a novelty, I suspect, is something different; the form "a wit" acquires a Mood.

I use this term for any stock feeling in a word which needs to be translated, for listing, into a sentence relating the speaker to someone else. Originally it is put in by the tone of voice, but a stock use of it need not be always self-conscious. Here the Mood, the real novelty in the word, which incidentally makes for a narrower sense of it, is "I have placed him; I am an individual and he is a type." This of course, if you were yourself a wit, could not be logically sustained, and anyway the type itself was not a very clear one. The idea of a Mood I think is needed to show why there was so much play of personal implication. It seems to have been put into many class-names of that rather schoolboyish period, for example into the queer word "parson." The implication is that of the Comedy of Humors, that one belittles a man merely by classifying him; his Humor is supposed to be a Ruling Passion, so that all his actions are explained by it: he is regarded as a mechanical toy. Pope himself makes much play with this claim in the *Satires.* It makes the speaker superior if only because it gives him a feeling of social power—he can manage people easily now that he has "placed" them. Thus the appearance of the Mood at this date does not need explaining for this word in particular. But one could maintain, taking a historical view, that the word *wit* had been sinking in dignity, partly because of the gradual rise of *sense* to take over many of its functions, and that this might give a feeling of belittlement to the word in the functions it still had. Pope did not fully accept this; as was said in effect by Warburton, he set out to combine the seventeenth and nineteenth century notions of wit, range of imaginative power and bright social criticism. The view of him as tied to a blind "classicism" is of course quite wrong; he imagined he was striking a balance between Longinus' "The true sublime thrills and transports the reader" and Horace's "Fools admire but men of sense approve." It is a mistake to suppose that his use of the word could not come near Coleridge's Imagination.

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In a true piece of wit all things must be
Yet all things there agree
. . . as the primitive forms of all
(If we compare great things with small)
Which without discord or confusion lie
In that strange Mirror of the Deity.

This is Cowley's *Ode to Wit,* and it was in easy reach; he if no other metaphysical poet was still read. What it makes the word mean, after laboring to cut out the idea of jokes, is almost exactly Coleridge's divine coadunative power. This view indeed had become suspected in favor of the rationalism of Locke's theory of wit (opposing it to judgment) but one could get at a decent distance from Locke by insisting that the kind of wit now in hand was True.

A wit, then, or man who displays wit, may be a

1. bright social talker
2. critic of the arts or of society
3. poet or artist,

and in each class he may be divided into similar heads;

a. mocking
b. acting as judge
c. giving aesthetic pleasure or expressing new truths.

These divisions are perhaps only a matter of how he is applying his wit, and in all of them there is a doubt about what qualities of mind are so called. This is decided in a given case mainly by emotions of admiration or satirical amusement, expressed somehow by the context or tone of voice, and the resulting change in the Sense of the word is I think best expressed by plus and minus signs. (The usual technical terms for this are Appreciative and Depreciative Pregnancy.) No doubt in themselves Fancy and Imagination, or whatever the pair may be, are radically different and ought not to be symbolized in this way, but by doing it we imitate the pretense of Pope that they are similar. It is also convenient to introduce a sense "4" to cover the grammatical form "wit" as apart from "a wit"; the plus and minus signs are originally attached to that, but

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they can be called in to qualify the persons possessing wit as well.

4+ conceptual force, range of imaginative power

4— power to make neat jokes or ornament an accepted structure.

Because of the Mood, there is a rule that a wit must not have all these advantages at once.

We have now to decide how the equations go between these meanings, and no doubt it depends a good deal how you interpret the style. After I had written down my version I found an excellent school edition of the poem with notes by J. Churton Collins. His first note on the word *wit*, after saying that the various shades of meaning should be carefully distinguished, goes like this:

> Its derivation is from the A.-S. *witan*, 'to know' so that its primary meaning is (a) the knowing power, pure intellect, mental capacity as in [line 17] and in lines 53, 61, 210 and elsewhere; then (b) in a slightly wider sense, genius, as in line 657; then (c) as a synonym for ingenious or gifted writers, as in line 36; next (d) it comes to mean knowledge, learning, or ingenuity, as in 259, 447, 468, 494, 508, particularly 'polite learning,' 652. Next it is a synonym (e) for imagination or fancy, as in 292, 590, 717, 722. Then (f) it is employed for judgement, as in [the couplet 80-81], where it is employed in a double sense, imagination, and the control of imagination, i.e., judgement. Lastly, it is employed in the sense in which it was occasionally used in Pope's time and is generally used now; namely, as "a combination of heterogeneous images, the discovery of occult resemblances between things apparently dissimilar," as in line 28.

"Primary" at the beginning of this passage is a pun, carrying the equation "historically first, and therefore the chief meaning in Pope's time." ("The first is the chief.") The preface says that the edition is designed mainly for the use of students, both in England and in the Colonies. It seems to me that this otherwise excellent note is likely to give a foreign student an entirely wrong idea about the tone of the word, and indeed of the whole poem. Even when it gets to "lastly" the definition of a joke is so scarifying as to be quite unrecognizable, and at best this idea is at the bottom of the pile. I had been taking for granted, and I still do, that there

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is not a single use of the word in the whole poem in which the idea of a joke is quite out of sight. Indeed I think that the whole structure of thought in the poem depends on this. It was the deliberate policy of Pope to start from the slang meaning of the word, because it gave the tone of society:

> *Without good breeding truth is disapproved;*
> *That only makes superior sense beloved.* (576)

and indeed because

> *The current folly proves the ready wit.* (449)

Wit as joke could be relied upon as the "head meaning," because the flippant reader could be trusted to think of it in any context; the context in the poem often makes it very unsuitable and the other meaning which is required then appears as the subject of the equation, the thing "meant by the word," but the idea of the joke or the smart joker will still crop up as a predicate of it. To be sure this could not be done unless the other meanings were in fairly easy reach; if the use had too much feeling of strain, so as to give an effect of metaphor, the meaning "joke" would appear as subject because it would be felt as "what the word really means." But the other meanings were still in regular use; the point is merely that the term "a wit" made a false claim to simplicity. I take it then that "1" the bright social talker never appears as subject in an equation; if the term is definitely used about such a man it appears flat. But when it is used about a poet or critic the word will compare either of these to the smart joker, and I think the critic is close enough to the idea of the coffeehouse wit to appear as predicate in some equations on his own. It seems to me that if you write down the more pointed equations, on this general principle, you get a fairly complete parody of the Augustan critical position.

$3 = 1, 2 = 1$. Both poet and critic are social entertainers and must keep to the tone of polite society, since that is the final judge of the arts.

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3 = 2	The poet is a critic; he should judge his work coolly, not rely on enthusiasm.
3c = 3a	The normal mode of poetry, in itself merely a cultivated pleasure, is satire.
a = b	The satirist is a judge; he tells the truth about life and upholds wisdom and virtue.
4 + = 4 —	The field of imaginative writing is limited and simple; one can go ahead and give the correct rules.
3b + = 1a —	Even in authoritative writers one must expect a certain puppyishness.

II

I had better begin the examples with one that shows "a wit" being treated with some contempt, as apparently there is a doubt whether this happens. The form comes in Mr. Churton Collins' list only as "(c) a synonym for ingenious or gifted writers," with a reference to the following passage:

> *Some have at first for wits, then poets passed,*
> *Turned critics next, and proved plain fools at last.*
> *Some neither can for wits nor critics pass,*
> *As half-formed mules are neither horse nor ass.*
> *These half-formed witlings, numerous in our isle*
> *As half-formed insects on the banks of Nile;*
> *Unfinished things, one knows not what to call,*
> *Their generation's so equivocal;*
> *To tell them would a hundred tongues require,*
> *Or one vain wit's, which might a hundred tire.* (36-45)

Certainly Pope does not say, and could not say, that a wit as such is always contemptible; but it is made clear that an inferior kind of wit (a witling) is very common, so that we expect him to be referred to when we hear more about wits; and the final turn of contempt is a kick at some type of person who it seems is really a wit, though a vain one. You might even read *vain* as a sort of Homeric stock epithet, implying that all wits may be assumed to be

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vain; and indeed these witlings are being satirized, however unfairly, for just that combination of functions which the term "a wit" seems designed to recommend. The whole passage is something like an attack on the idea of "a wit" in general. It comes early in the poem and helps to set the tone. But this of course is not a complete account of the thing; Pope is involved in the business of being "a wit" himself, and on the other hand there is no suggestion that all good writers are contemptible in the same way that "wits" are. He is kicking at his own vocabulary, and can hardly avoid kicking at himself; and our chief impression after recognizing this picture of the bad writers is that the good writers are something different and yet something to which it would not be sensible to give another name.

As a rule, indeed, the poem uses a limitation of one counter merely as the only way to exalt another one;

> *One science only will one genius fit,*
> *So vast is art, so narrow human wit,* (61)

or contrariwise

> *Great wits may sometimes gloriously offend*
> *And rise to faults true critics dare not mend;*
> *From vulgar bounds with brave disorder part*
> *And snatch a grace beyond the reach of art.* (159)

It is only by narrowing *wit* and *art* each in turn that he contrives to elevate the concepts they might be supposed to name. Incidentally wit in the abstract is given the negative role in this couple, and "wits" are given the positive one; there is no animus against the form "a wit" as such. The only effect of the process, which does not feel at all like a contradiction, is to imply that there is a hierarchy which ordinary language cannot be expected to describe directly.

However even the "great wits" of this quatrain, if you took it alone, might still be rather lightweight writers; cavalier love poets writing with the ease of gentlemen, perhaps. Pope in this

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kind of use meant to include any poet, however impressive, among his wits, and I must now try to give convincing enough examples of the high use of the term; most readers perhaps will have more easily believed in the low one, unlike Mr. Churton Collins. As he pointed out, the term is used for "the knowing power" taken in general:

> *Nature to all things fixed the limits fit*
> *And wisely curbed proud man's pretending wit.* (53)

Of course there is still a joke in it; the thinker is dwarfed when he pits himself against heaven, and can therefore be compared by implication to the coffeehouse atheist making blasphemous quips. But the meaning imposed on the term as the relevant one for the context is as high as any human mental power.

> *He who, supreme in judgement, as in wit,*
> *Might boldly censure, as he boldly writ,*
> *Yet judged with coolness though he sung with fire;*
> *His precepts teach but what his works inspire.* (657)

There is no trace here of a desire to sneer at Horace by speaking of his wit; the antithesis seems to make it mean his imagination, which was so strong that it needed strong judgment to control it. But there is still room for the simpler idea; when he came to criticism, his "fire" might have expressed itself in making very rude jokes about bad authors; but instead of this boldness he judged coolly and "talked us into sense."

A more definite, though less warm, example is therefore given by the following antithesis:

> *Authors are partial to their wit, tis true,*
> *But are not critics to their judgement too?* (18)

Judgment being the main function of a critic, the wit of an author can hardly be less than his creative power. This gives a firm definition of the sense required by the context, even though the secondary meaning is also particularly clear. What the author

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likes best are the flashy parts, the jokes or the purple passages; he is always puppyish.

The passage about Aristotle is nearly an unambiguous use of the high sense of *wit*.

> *Poets, a race long unconfined, and free,*
> *Still fond and proud of savage liberty,*
> *Received his laws; and stood convinced twas fit*
> *Who conquered Nature, should preside o'er Wit.* (652)

Mr. Churton Collins says that this means "polite learning," part of his group "d" which includes knowledge and ingenuity. I found this a puzzling unit till I realized that he was claiming a logical distinction between "products of wit" and "the capacity to produce them," and that this was meant to subdivide any specified sense of *wit*. He had much better have said so; his Colonial students will have to be on their toes here if they are to guess his meaning. But in any case I think Aristotle might preside over both these logical entities. A more interesting question is whether there is any joke about *wit* here. It is against the poets rather than against Aristotle; the shaggy barbarians, as they droop before their conqueror, seem unlikely to have a very great supply of the polished facetiousness of which they are so proud. Or rather (as we should interpret this picture) the smart fellow who thinks he can give a quick answer on questions of taste is really more of a barbarian than he supposes, and ought to be thankful that Aristotle took the trouble to make laws for him. This I think is the suggestion intended; but none the less the main statement intended is that Aristotle does preside over wit, and indeed is a wit, the chief one.

> *No longer now that golden age appears*
> *When patriarch-wits survived a thousand years;*
> *Now length of fame (our second life) is lost,*
> *And bare three-score is all even that can boast.* (470)

I take it this is a much more definite joke; Methusaleh is absurd in

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himself, and the idea of his being witty for a thousand years is positively depressing. We are to feel that Homer (who has just been mentioned) cannot really be placed as a wit, because this points the contrast with the contemporary scene. The very name of a modern artist proves that he cannot stand up to immortality. But Homer is unflinchingly called a wit, and no doubt would prove to have the frailties of the species if Pope could meet him. There is an idea that he was a moralist, as Methusaleh presumably was, and as Pope is, but it is not elaborated. Pope here is in effect satirizing his own key term, but without any hint that some other would be better; indeed no other would suggest so clearly that there is a hierarchy of literature which it would be ridiculous to peg down by terms.

> *Some to conceit alone their taste confine*
> *And glittering thoughts struck out at every line;*
> *Pleased with a work where nothing's just or fit,*
> *One glaring Chaos and wild heap of wit.* (292)

No doubt this is a smack at Cowley and any other metaphysicals not yet forgotten, but the grandeur of the suggestions in the background prevents it from seeming an unfair one. There is perhaps an idea that great powers are seen most clearly in a tragically suicidal freedom; they create their destruction. There is a doubt, as usual in the form "A and B of C," whether "chaos" is qualified by "of wit"; a heap of jokes is a trivial kind of chaos, but if we choose to read "a chaos of wit" there is a certain note of doom. The two readings are related, I think, by the idea behind *MacFlecknoe* and the *Dunciad*, that there is an ominous mystery in the way the lowest and most absurd things make an exact parallel with the highest. For this idea you invert the conventional equation and read "4— = 4 +"; Pope made fuller use of it later in life. I have taken this example last of the "high" uses of *wit*, and will now go on to what might be called the social applications of the standing contrasts in the word.

We have already seen that *wit* in the abstract is alternately opposed to judgment and identified with it:

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Some, to whom Heav'n in wit has been profuse
Want as much more, to turn it to its use;
For wit and judgement often are at strife,
Though meant each other's aid, like man and wife. (80)

Warburton makes an amusing attempt to clear this up, but had little right to be surprised, because the process of alternately identifying and separating a key pair of opposites is a fundamental one for the style.

> Here the poet (in a sense he was not, at first, aware of) has given us an example of the truth of his observation itself. . . . In the first line, Wit is used, in the modern sense, for the effort of Fancy; in the second it is used, in the ancient sense, for the result of Judgement. This trick, played on the reader, he endeavoured to keep out of sight . . . (by making a trivial change in the second line). . . . The truth is, the Poet had said a lively thing, and would, at all hazards, preserve the reputation of it, though the very topic he is on obliged him to detect the imposition; in the very next lines, which show he meant two very different things, by the same term, in the two preceding.

Man and wife are allowed the same surname; in the same way, Pope had every right to choose a term covering both his allied ideas and allowing a generalization to be expressed about them together; and it was graceful to choose an unassuming one. The writer unwilling to face the labors of correction is to be exhorted to do so, and the best exhortation is to tell him that this is only another part of the straightforward (the humanly vain) impulse to display his wit. This was the main use of identifying the poet and the critic, creation and polish, in the one key term; and indeed Blake himself, with his hundreds of corrections in the poems dictated to him by the Holy Spirit, could hardly deny that inspiration and revision are part of the same process. Pope, I think, in making *wit* his general term, felt not only that it was persuasive to adopt the tone of polite society but that he was working against "the very thing that gives modern Criticism its character; whose whole complexion is *abuse* and *censure*." The good humor of the thing was meant to exhort the reader against pettiness. Here, I suppose, as so often, his method betrayed him, and the effect of the identity was rather the other way.

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True wit is Nature to advantage dressed,
What oft was thought, but ne'er so well expressed;
Something, whose truth convinced at sight we find
That gives us back the image of our mind. (297)

"True" is of course an invocation to the god in the machine of the term "wit." It may be Imagination "+" or simply "wit that tells truth" "b", perhaps only in personal satire "a", which would reduce wit to jokes "—". *The image of our mind* is chiefly what we had already felt about the matter in hand, from our previous experience of it; but it may also be something in the structure of the mind itself, not corresponding to anything in the outer world, a taste for myths for example (that is, "true" can mean truly beautiful, true to the facts of aesthetics), and this would let us approve of any degree of unreality in the wit. Pope clearly means to praise some kind of truth, but the usual drag towards the drawing room has a powerful effect here. I think that the strongest resultant meaning is to impute a queer sort of democracy to the work of the gentleman poet; the essential fact about a true, as apart from a vain, wit is that he is not a bore.

Dr. Johnson, from whom sympathy might have been expected, thought the definition both false and foolish; novelty was not as unwelcome as all that; such an account of wit "depresses it below its natural dignity, and reduces it from strength of thought to happiness of language." This interpretation I think simply followed from having less respect for polite drawing rooms. For a really solemn treatment of the couplet we must go to Warburton, whose note on it makes a bold attempt to keep Locke at bay and decides that it really means to recommend Optimism, or flattery towards Nature.

> Mr. Locke had defined *Wit* to consist in "the assemblage of ideas, and putting those together, with quickness and variety, wherein can be found any resemblance or congruity, whereby to make up pleasant pictures and agreeable visions in the fancy." But that great Philosopher, in separating *Wit* from *Judgement*, as he does here, has given us (and he could therefore give us no other) only an account of wit in general;

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> in which false Wit, though not every species of it, is included. A *striking Image* of Nature, is therefore, as Mr. Locke observes, certainly *Wit;* but this image may strike on several other accounts, as well as for its *truth* and *beauty;* and the Philosopher has explained the manner how. But it never becomes that wit which is the ornament of true Poesy, whose end is to represent Nature, but when it *dresses that Nature to advantage*, and presents us to her in the brightest and most amiable light.

This interpretation would not have occurred to me, but it is adopted by Mr. Churton Collins, and certainly helps to illustrate the rich confusion of these apparently simple couplets. However, the main purpose of Warburton's note is to claim that the opposites have been reconciled: "whenever *Wit* corresponds with *Judgement*, we may be sure that it is *true*."

It seemed worth looking at this old puzzle because it serves to show what irrelevant problems arise if you do not interpret the poem in the light of its social tone, and this is largely a matter of getting the right play out of *wit*. I hope this view will not be taken to imply that all the uses of the word are facetious or contemptuous. Neither of these two last examples was so intended, and many uses are intended definitely the other way, to provide an escape from the harshness of the criteria that Pope was laying down.

> *As men of breeding, sometimes men of wit*
> *To avoid great errors, will the less commit;*
> *Neglect the rules each verbal critic lays,*
> *For not to know some trifles is a praise.* (259)

The tenderness of Pope towards a real poet has something touching about it; he feels that such a person is sure to need protection, and adopts rather the same tone towards him as towards young ladies. The real gentleman is expected to be a help in getting him treated decently; it would I suppose be fussy to separate the wit of Sense "1", the social talker, into two classes only one of which has "breeding," but the distinction is fairly well marked. Incidentally it is clear here that the antitheses are not meant to be ex-

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clusive; the first line opposes gentlemen to writers, but Pope certainly did not intend to say that a writer cannot be a gentleman; the terms name functions of the complete man rather than types, and even the functions are called similar. The only way to make the head meaning "1" appear as predicate inside *wit,* in this example, is to distinguish the polite man from the joker, but even if you regard the man of breeding as one who makes jokes tactfully the head meaning "1" is still prominently in view.

What is perhaps the finest line about *wit* brings in "generous," a key word for Pope though not a frequent one.

> *A perfect judge will read each work of wit*
> *With the same spirit that its author writ;*
> *Survey the WHOLE, nor seek small faults to find*
> *Where Nature moves, and rapture warms the mind,*
> *Nor lose, for that malignant dull delight*
> *The generous pleasure to be charmed with wit.* (233)

How are we to get away from Horace and "Fools admire, but men of sense approve"? Can we sometimes forgive authors who do not copy Homer exactly? This background of stupid and frightened nagging, I think, gives the last couplet great power. It is generous, that is, indulgent and forgiving, of a superior critic to put up with mere "wit"; what he likes is Homer. Also in a way it is noble (generous as well-born) to enjoy calmly what is available; the best in this kind are but shadows, as a Duke said of Bottom. Only as a third alternative does the dangerous idea poke up; that no one but the broad, unspecialized and in a way careless person (the well-born soul) can recognize a new development of the imagination even when it is thrust under his nose, and that even he only does it by rejoicing. The whole world of the Rules and the "slight faults" is dwarfed and trampled upon, and the bad rhyme is meant as a brave illustration of the virtues of carelessness which are being praised. *Generous* indeed still meant "brave" (a dictionary of 1623 actually defines it as "valiant, noble"). There is again a certain tenderness towards the reader who is capable of doing this; it is really very good of him, because he is sure to make

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a fool of himself quite often. What kind of wit he is admiring cannot be known beforehand, and the pathos of the inadequacy of man still hangs over the whole topic.

The feeling that there is something unpleasant about the whole business of being a poet was expressed by Pope with great dignity in his prefaces, and it is this touch of self-pity which gives the more human side of his incessant play on the word. There is a fine paragraph on the unpleasing fate of genius which seems to reach beyond the stock comparison to the joker and suggest rather the romantic view of the clown.

> *Unhappy wit, like most mistaken things,*
> *Atones not for the envy that it brings.*
> *In youth alone its empty praise we boast,*
> *But soon the short-lived vanity is lost. . . .*
> *What is this Wit, which must our cares employ?*
> *The owner's wife, which other men enjoy;*
> *Then most our trouble still when most admired,*
> *And still the more we give, the more required . . .*
> *Tis what the vicious fear, the virtuous shun,*
> *By fools tis hated, and by knaves undone.* (494-507)

Wit appears essentially mistaken in this passage, even the good kind of wit which *the vicious fear,* and the reason must be that all worthy labors are mistaken by comparison to an assault on Heaven. This overriding religious sentiment allows of a high view of wit (and Pope is using the first person) but even here a lower view is allowed to be a natural one; why otherwise do the virtuous shun it? The poet-outcast idea is no less strong in Pope than in Byron; he must expect to be despised because of his merits, so if he is to use the language of the world he must at least pretend to despise himself. The idea that the young lyrical poet always arouses hatred seems to be made more plausible by dissolving it into the idea of the satirical "wit" who goads the mob; but even this figure seems to enjoy his duty only so far as he remains childish, a Shakespearean fool perhaps. "Yet then did Gildon draw his venal quill" in the early days of Pope's *Pastorals* "when pure

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description took the place of sense"; no doubt Pope would have denied that this opposition is a real one.

As the appeal goes on (it is the heart of the poem) the wit is urged to distinguish himself from the clown by behaving with good nature; as usual, the terms put into an antithesis are thereby made to overlap.

> *And while self-love each jealous writer rules,*
> *Contending wits become the sport of fools.* (517)

Their vanity is the chief reason why they deserve the slang term *wit;* but if so, after all, it may well apply to many learned and profound thinkers. The next paragraph indeed recognizes that Pope is urging the impossible, and the writer is asked at any rate to make his clownishness respectable by venting his spleen upon vice or blasphemy. In the Restoration period this was not done:

> *Jilts ruled the state, and statesmen farces writ,*
> *Nay wits had pensions, and young lords had wit;*
> *The fair sat panting at a courtier's play,*
> *And not a mask went unimproved away.* (539)

We are back in the normal double attitude. It would seem a good thing that the dashing aristocrat under the Restoration set out to write verse and often did it well; Pope can admit this without losing his tone of contempt, because the type of wit in view may be a merely social one, and besides, the lords of his own day are despised for not showing it. The government of his own day is despised for not giving pensions. The wit in need of a pension he could also despise for not being a lord; so that the line gives him a full superiority all round.

> *Encouraged thus, Wit's Titans braved the skies*
> *And the press groaned with licensed blasphemies.* (552)

It may be either *wits* or *Titans* who are ridiculously inadequate for this purpose; *wit* may also have its gods, genuine good writers who are at home in the skies. There is again a touch of "4 — = 4 +," the ominous idea that the lowest is an exact

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parallel of the highest. Yet it is clear that the same machinery would allow him to despise any writer who deviated into infidelity; already a wit, such a man would automatically become a comic kind of wit.

It is difficult to analyze this satirist without satirizing him, but to say that his tricks were often used unfairly does not go very far. The contradictions of his self-contempt and self-justification are erected into a solid and intelligent humility before the triumphs and social usefulness possible to his art. And it is the same evasively contemptuous use of his formula which saves him from the abject reverence for rules and ancients of which he is commonly accused. The statements against the rules are, after all, very resounding:

> *We cannot blame, indeed, but we may sleep.* (242)

And in a later poem

> *Reason raise o'er instinct as you can*
> *In this tis God directs, in that tis man.*

He is always ready with his contempt for those who accept the rules he identifies himself with:

> *The rules a nation, born to serve, obeys*
> *And Boileau still by right of Horace sways.*
> *While we, brave Britons, foreign laws despised,*
> *And kept unconquered and uncivilised.* (714)

The "critic-learning" of the French does not seem to be called mistaken; there is only a possibility that Boileau's claim to be heir of Horace might be wrong. But while Pope despises the English for breaking the rules he contrives still more to despise the French for keeping them. The only final question about Pope, I think, since you cannot think him wrong after a full analysis of his meaning, is as to the quality of the contempt through whose action his meaning is imposed; whether you find this a nasty little view of human affairs or a nobly stern one.

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Lament of Liadan

BARBARA GIBBS

The ollave poetess Liadan of Corkaguiney, having promised to marry Curithir, who was also an ollave, was deterred by scruples concerning her vocation. She took a vow of chastity, and he, in despair, did the same. They lived for a period in one monastery, where they were permitted to converse but never to see one another. Ultimately Curithir was banished from the monastery for having asked that this proscription be relaxed.

Curithir is dead. The year
Breaks not earth in its cycle.
The world is clear as feldspar
Or a new casten bell.

The spring grass looks for spaces
To come through, kept from birth
By iron under-surfaces.
The sun has not traveled north

As he wont after solstice.
What god is unreconciled?
I was put apprentice
To poetry as a child

By my father the ollave
And set to learn what no scribes
Are permitted to engrave
Openly in the archives,

Myth and many recondite
Cyphers and all of science—
Though my girl-cousins were taught
To weave linen and to dance

And loop up their hair with bands
Blue as Arianrhod's circlet
That in northern prison binds
Sleeping king and dead poet.

*

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I was made the ollave
To the king of Corkaguiney
At twenty-one and a half,
And upon ceremony

Rode in courteous circuit
To all who court poets were
Of Connaught. What time I met,
Not thinking of love, Curithir.

Love entered through our eyes
And we gladly made for him
A word-ladder between us
That he might go and come;

He quickly wove a cruel
Woof on our warp of words
And linked our minds so well
That he disciplined our hearts—

Who would outwit him must be
Cleverer than his mother;
To be adept in poetry
Does one little good here!

*

I promised to meet him,
After I had taken leave
Of Corkaguiney, my home,
Where he pleased, to be his wife,

Although I disliked the word—
Since I had been used to care
For no nets but those of art
And to love song, not singer.

He spoke of sons we would have
And legends around our name;
I said: "If not our love
Makes us full, will a poem?"

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I've often seen the Night-mare
In my dreams. Her nostrils blow
Widening bracelets of fire;
When her mane lifts, the yellow

Neck bears a magic cypher.
She's the goddess Cerridwen:
If any win her favor
They may drink from her cauldron;

White is her color; the may
That blossoms by magic wells
In the month of chastity
Is her thorn of denial.

*

Underneath the whitethorn I
Halted my train and there took
The vow of chastity
Which it is death to break.

Then I went with Curithir.
Up and down Ireland we passed
Like birds whom rough weather
Has torn out of the nest.

We came, sick and exhausted,
To St. Cummine's monastery;
The great holy man prescribed
For us an astringent law:

For our lifetime to forswear
Whichever seemed less precious
To our love, to speak together
Or see one another's face.

We kept the rule for twelve months;
A thick, wattled palisade
Between us denied the least glance,
But we talked, and I was not sad.

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But Curithir, finding no rest,
Begged a more lenient freedom;
Believing us unchaste
Holy Cummine banished him!

*

Now the sun shines purple;
Ice binds the earth everywhere;
Crows fly not; no green signal
Flags up the impatient year;

And I know my days forfeit
To the order I have undone;
Irony for the poet—
To die that life may begin!

Nor impugns it the verdict
That I was falsely rated;
Below the level of act
Are the extreme choices made:

The false resembles the true—
Behold the deceiving sun
That in April lets deep snow
Lie on courtyard and fountain!

*

Alas! I have been colder
Than the incontinent grave:
It will be each one's lover
When they no longer need love.

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The Four Forms of Prose Fiction

NORTHROP FRYE

THERE SEEMS TO BE no rational classification of prose forms. We are still struggling with the circulating-library conception of fiction as the opposite of "non-fiction," fiction dealing with subjects admitted not to be true, and non-fiction with everything else. The basis for this distinction seems to be a hazy idea that the real meaning of fiction is falsehood or unreality. Thus an autobiography would be classified as non-fiction if the librarian believed the author, and as fiction if she thought he was lying. It is difficult to see what use this can be to a literary critic. Surely the word fiction, which, like poetry, means etymologically something made for its own sake, ought to be applied in criticism to any work of art in prose. Or, if that is too much to ask, at least some protest can be entered against the sloppy habit of identifying fiction with the one genuine form of fiction which we know as the novel.

Let us look at a few of the unclassified books lying on the boundary of "non-fiction" and "literature." Is *Tristram Shandy* a novel? Nearly everyone would say yes, in spite of its easygoing disregard of "story values." Is *Gulliver's Travels* a novel? Here most would demur, including the Dewey decimal system, which puts it under "Satire and Humor." But surely everyone would call it fiction, and if it is fiction, a distinction appears between fiction as a genus and the novel as a species of that genus. Shifting the ground to fiction, then, is *Sartor Resartus* fiction? If not, why not? If it is, is *The Anatomy of Melancholy* fiction? If not, what is its place in English literature? The usual answer is that, though its subject matter is non-fiction, it is written with "style," the presence of which always makes any book literary. Not many critics would want to explore the conception of style involved in this proposition. Is Borrow's *Lavengro* fiction? Every-

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man's Library says yes; the World's Classics puts it under "Travel and Topography."

The literary historian who identifies fiction with the novel is greatly embarrassed by the length of time that the world managed to get along without the novel, and until he reaches his great deliverance in Defoe, his perspective is intolerably cramped. He is compelled to reduce Tudor fiction to a series of tentative essays in the novel form, which works well enough for Deloney but makes nonsense of Sidney. He postulates a great fictional gap in the seventeenth century which exactly covers the golden age of English prose. He finally discovers that the word novel, which up to about 1900 was still the name of a more or less recognizable form, has since expanded into a catchall term which can be applied to practically any book that is not "on" something. Clearly, this novel-centered view of prose fiction is a Ptolemaic perspective which is now too complicated to be any longer workable, and some more relative and Copernican view must take its place.

When we start to think seriously about the novel, not as fiction, but as a form of fiction, we feel that its characteristics, whatever they are, are such as make, say, Defoe, Fielding, Austen, and James central in its tradition, and Borrow, Peacock, Melville, and Emily Brontë somehow peripheral. This is not an estimate of merit: we may easily prefer *Moby Dick* to *The Egoist* and yet feel that Meredith's book is closer to being a typical novel. Fielding's conception of the novel as a comic epic in prose seems fundamental to the tradition he did so much to establish. In novels that we think of as typical, like those of Jane Austen, plot and dialogue are closely linked to the conventions of the comedy of manners. The conventions of *Wuthering Heights* are linked rather with the tale and the ballad. They seem to have more affinity with tragedy, and the tragic emotions of passion and fury, which would shatter the balance of tone in Jane Austen, can be safely accommodated here. So can the supernatural, or the suggestion of it, which is difficult to get into a novel. The shape of the plot is different: instead of maneuvering around a central situation, as Jane Austen

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does, Emily Brontë tells her story with linear accents, and she seems to need the help of a narrator, who would be absurdly out of place in Jane Austen. Conventions so different justify us in regarding *Wuthering Heights* as a different form of prose fiction from the novel, a form which we shall here call the romance.

The essential difference between novel and romance lies in the conception of characterization. The romancer does not attempt to create "real people," for his major characters at least, but stylized figures which expand into psychological archetypes. It is to the romance that the student of Jung would go to find his "libido," his "anima," and his "shadow" reflected in the hero, heroine, and villain respectively. That is why the romance so often radiates a glow of subjective intensity that the novel lacks, and why a suggestion of allegory is constantly creeping in around its fringes. Certain elements of character are released in the romance which make it naturally a more revolutionary form than the novel. The novelist deals with personality, with characters wearing their *personae* or social masks. He needs the framework of a stable society, and many of our best novelists have been conventional to the verge of fussiness. The romancer deals with individuality, with characters *in vacuo* idealized by revery, and, however conservative he may be, something nihilistic and untamable is likely to keep breaking out of his pages.

The prose romance, then, is an independent form of fiction to be distinguished from the novel and extracted from the miscellaneous heap of prose works now covered by that term. Even in the other heap known as "short stories" one can isolate the tale form used by Poe, which bears the same relation to the full-length romance that the short stories of Chekhov or Mansfield do to the novel. We must admit, however, that "pure" examples of either form can never be found; there is hardly any modern romance that could not be made out to be a novel, and *vice versa*. The forms of prose fiction are mixed, like racial strains in human beings, not separable like the sexes. In fact the popular demand in fiction is always for a mixed form, a romantic novel just romance enough for the reader to project his "libido" on the hero

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and his "anima" on the heroine, and just novel enough to keep these projections in a reassuringly familiar world. It may be asked, therefore, what is the use of making the above distinction, especially when, though undeveloped in criticism, it is by no means unrealized. It is no surprise to hear that Trollope wrote novels and William Morris romances.

The reason is that a great romancer should be examined in terms of the conventions he chose. William Morris should not be left on the side lines of prose fiction merely because the critic has not learned to take the romance form seriously. Nor, in view of what has been said about the revolutionary nature of the romance, should his choice of that form be regarded as an "escape" from his social attitude. If Scott has any claims to be a romancer, it is not good criticism to deal only with his defects as a novelist. The romantic qualities of *The Pilgrim's Progress* too, its archetypal characterization and its revolutionary approach to religious experience, make it a well-rounded example of a literary form: it is not merely a book swallowed by English literature to get some religious bulk in its diet. Finally, when Hawthorne, in the preface to *The House of the Seven Gables,* insists that his story should be read as romance and not as novel, it is possible that he meant what he said, even though he indicates that the prestige of the rival form has induced the romancer to apologize for not using it.

Romance is older than the novel, a fact which has developed the historical illusion that it is something to be outgrown, a juvenile and undeveloped form. The social affinities of the romance, with its grave idealizing of heroism and purity, are with the aristocracy, and it revived in the period we call Romantic as part of the Romantic tendency to archaic feudalism and a cult of the hero, or idealized libido. In England the romances of Scott and, in less degree, the Brontës, are part of a mysterious Northumbrian renaissance, a Romantic reaction against the new industrialism in the Midlands, which also produced the poetry of Wordsworth and Burns and the philosophy of Carlyle. It is not surprising, therefore, that an important theme in the more bourgeois novel should be the parody of the romance and its ideals. The tradition estab-

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lished by *Don Quixote* continues in a type of novel which looks at a romantic situation from its own point of view, so that the conventions of the two forms make up an ironic compound instead of a sentimental mixture. This subspecies ranges from the spoofing of *Northanger Abbey* to the clinical analyses of *Madame Bovary* and *Lord Jim.*

We have spoken of the tendency to allegory in the romance, arising from the vaguely intensified significance which it gives to human activity. Sexual symbolism is close to the surface of most romance. One thinks of the very Freudian current of water which separates hero from heroine in Morris' *The Sundering Flood,* and of even balder statements of sexual mythopoeia in Poe. On this level too appear the Jungian archetypes already mentioned. Symbolism of this sort may be largely involuntary on the author's part, but conscious allegory belongs to the same tradition. One reason is that the romance, which deals with heroes, is intermediate between the novel, which deals with men, and the myth, which deals with gods. Prose romance first appears as a late development of Classical mythology, and the prose Sagas of Iceland follow close on the mythical Eddas. We see the recrudescence of myth whenever a romancer makes his allegory explicit, as Christian mythical patterns reappear in *The Pilgrim's Progress,* and even more primitive ones in Hawthorne.

The novel does not have this affinity with the myth. It tends rather to expand into a fictional approach to history. The soundness of Fielding's instinct in calling *Tom Jones* a history is confirmed by the general rule that the larger the scheme of a novel becomes, the more obviously its historical nature appears. As it is creative history, however, the novelist usually prefers his material in a plastic, or roughly contemporary state, and feels cramped by a fixed historical pattern. The so-called historical novel is generally a romance presenting some kind of historicized myth. It is perhaps this link with history and a sense of temporal context that has confined the novel, in striking contrast to the worldwide romance, to the alliance of time and Western man.

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II

Autobiography is another form which merges with the novel by a series of insensible gradations. By itself it can hardly be called prose fiction at all; but most autobiographies are inspired by a creative, and therefore fictional, impulse to select only those events and experiences in the writer's life that go to build up an integrated pattern. This pattern may be something larger than himself with which he has come to identify himself, or simply the coherence of his character and attitudes. We may call this very important form of prose fiction the confession form, following St. Augustine, who appears to have invented it, and Rousseau, who established a modern type of it. The earlier tradition gave *Religio Medici, Grace Abounding,* and Newman's *Apologia* to English literature, besides the related but subtly different type of confession favored by the mystics.

Here again, as with the romance, there is some value in recognizing a distinct prose form in the confession. It gives several of our best prose works a definable place in fiction instead of keeping them in a vague limbo of books which are not quite literature because they are "thought," and not quite religion or philosophy because they are Examples of Prose Style. The confession, too, like the novel and the romance, has its own short form, the familiar essay, and Montaigne's *livre de bonne foy* is a confession made up of essays in which only the continuous narrative of the longer form is missing. Montaigne's scheme is to the confession what a work of fiction made up of short stories, such as Joyce's *Dubliners* or Boccaccio's *Decameron,* is to the novel or romance.

After Rousseau—in fact in Rousseau—the confession flows into the novel, and the mixture produces the fictional autobiography, the *Künstler-roman,* and kindred types. There is no literary reason why the subject of a confession should always be the author himself, and dramatic confessions have been used in the novel at least since *Moll Flanders.* The "stream of consciousness" technique permits of a much more concentrated fusion of the two forms.

When the confession is combined with the novel, however, the

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characteristics peculiar to the former show up clearly. Nearly always some theoretical and intellectual interest in religion, politics, or art plays a leading role in the confession. It is his success in integrating his mind on such subjects that makes the author of a confession feel that his life is worth writing about. But this interest in ideas and theoretical statements is alien to the genius of the novel proper, where the technical problem is to dissolve all theory into personal relationships. In Jane Austen, to take a familiar instance, church, state and culture are never examined except as social data, and Henry James has been described as having a mind so fine that no idea could violate it. The novelist who cannot get along without ideas, or has not the patience to digest them in the way that James did, instinctively resorts to what Mill calls a "mental history" of a single character. And when we find that a technical discussion of a theory of aesthetics forms the climax of Joyce's *Portrait,* we realize that what makes this possible is the presence in that novel of another tradition of prose fiction.

The novel tends to be extroverted and personal; its chief interest is in human character as it manifests itself in society. The romance tends to be introverted and personal: it also deals with characters, but in a more subjective way. (Subjective here refers to treatment, not subject matter. The characters of romance are heroic and therefore inscrutable; the novelist is freer to enter his characters' minds because he is more objective.) The confession is also introverted, but intellectualized in content. Our next step is evidently to discover a fourth form of fiction which is extroverted and intellectual.

III

We remarked earlier that most people would call *Gulliver's Travels* fiction but not a novel. It must then be another form of fiction, as it certainly has a form, and we feel that we are turning from the novel to this form, whatever it is, when we turn from Rousseau's *Emile* to Voltaire's *Candide,* or from Butler's *The Way of All Flesh* to the Erewhon books, or from Huxley's *Point*

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Counterpoint to *Brave New World*. The form thus has its own traditions, and, as the examples of Butler and Huxley show, has preserved some integrity even under the ascendancy of the novel. Its existence is easy enough to demonstrate, and no one will challenge the statement that the literary ancestry of *Gulliver's Travels* and *Candide* runs through Rabelais and Erasmus to Lucian. But while much has been said about the style and thought of Rabelais, Swift, and Voltaire, very little has been made of them as craftsmen working in a specific medium, a point no one dealing with a novelist would ignore. Another great writer in this tradition, Huxley's master Peacock, has fared even worse, for, his form not being understood, a general impression has grown up that his status in the development of prose fiction is that of a slapdash eccentric. Actually, he is as exquisite and precise an artist in his medium as Jane Austen is in hers.

The form used by these authors is the Menippean satire, also more rarely called the Varronian satire, allegedly invented by a Greek cynic named Menippus. His works are lost, but he had two great disciples, the Greek Lucian and the Roman Varro, and the tradition of Varro, who has not survived either except in fragments, was carried on by Petronius and Apuleius. The Menippean satire appears to have developed out of verse satire through the practice of adding prose interludes, but we know it only as a prose form, though one of its recurrent features (seen in Peacock) is the use of incidental verse.

The Menippean satire deals less with people as such than with mental attitudes. Pedants, bigots, cranks, parvenus, virtuosi, enthusiasts, rapacious and incompetent professional men of all kinds, are handled in terms of their "humor" or ruling passion, their occupational approach to life as distinct from their social behavior. The Menippean satire thus resembles the confession in its ability to handle abstract ideas and theories, and differs from the novel in its characterization, which is stylized rather than naturalistic, and presents people as mouthpieces of the ideas they represent. Here again no sharp boundary lines can or should be drawn, but if we compare a character in Jane Austen with a similar character

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in Peacock we can immediately feel the difference between the two forms. Squire Western belongs to the novel, but Thwackum and Square have Menippean blood in them. A constant theme in the tradition is the ridicule of the *philosophus gloriosus*. Lucian ridicules the Greek philosophers, Rabelais and Erasmus the scholastics, Swift the Cartesians and the Royal Society, Voltaire the Leibnitzians, Peacock the Romantics, Samuel Butler the Darwinians, Huxley the behaviorists. The reason for this is that, while the novelist sees evil and folly as social diseases, the Menippean satirist sees them as diseases of the intellect, as a kind of maddened pedantry which the *philosophus gloriosus* at once symbolizes and defines.

Petronius, Apuleius, Rabelais, Swift, and Voltaire all use a loose-jointed narrative form often confused with the romance. It differs from the romance, however (though there is a strong admixture of romance in Rabelais), as it is not primarily concerned with the exploits of heroes, but relies on the free play of intellectual fancy and the kind of humorous observation that produces caricature. It differs also from the picaresque form, which has the novel's interest in the actual structure of society. At its most concentrated the Menippean satire presents us with a vision of the world in terms of a single intellectual pattern. This it often attains by giving it a logical and self-consistent shift of perspective, presenting it as Lilliputian or Brobdingnagian, or from the point of view of an ass, a savage, or a drunk. Or it will take the form of a "marvelous journey" and present a caricature of a familiar society as the logical structure of an imaginary one. *Erewhon* and *Brave New World* are modern examples. Such a distorting mirror produces at least the unity of its frame: without it, the Menippean satirist inclines to a disorderliness which in *A Tale of a Tub* reaches the point of including a digression in praise of digressions. The intellectual structure he builds up from his story makes for violent dislocations in the customary logic of narrative, though the appearance of carelessness that results reflects only the carelessness of the reader.

The word "satire," in Roman and Renaissance times, meant

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either of two specific literary forms of that name, one (this one) prose and the other verse. Now it means a tone or attitude which may be found in any form of art whether literary or not. In the Menippean satires we have been discussing, the name of the form also applies to the attitude. As the name of an attitude, satire seems to be a combination of fantasy and morality, bounded on one side by the play of fancy which has no moral sting, and on the other by an invective which has no spontaneous humor. But as the name of a form, the term satire, though confined to literature, is more flexible, and can be either entirely fantastic or entirely moral. The Menippean adventure story may thus be pure fantasy, as it is in the literary fairy tale. The Alice books are perfect Menippean satires, and so is *The Water-Babies,* which has been influenced by Rabelais. The purely moral type is a serious vision of society as a single intellectual pattern, in other words a Utopia.

The short form of the Menippean satire is usually a dialogue or colloquy, in which the dramatic interest is in a conflict of ideas rather than of character. This is the favorite form of Erasmus, and is common in Voltaire. Here again the form is not invariably satiric in attitude, but shades off into more purely fanciful or moral discussions, like the *Imaginary Conversations* of Landor or the "dialogue of the dead." Sometimes this form expands to full length, and more than two speakers are used: the setting then is usually a *cena* or symposium, like the one that looms so large in Petronius. Plato, though much earlier in the field than Menippus, is a strong influence on this type, which stretches in an unbroken tradition down through those urbane and leisurely conversations which define the ideal courtier in Castiglione or the doctrine and discipline of angling in Walton. A modern development produces the country-house weekends in Peacock and Huxley in which the opinions and ideas and cultural interests expressed are as important as the love-making.

The novelist shows his exuberance either by an exhaustive analysis of human relationships, as in Henry James, or of social phenomena, as in Tolstoy. The Menippean satirist, dealing with intellectual themes and attitudes, shows his exuberance in intel-

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lectual ways, by piling up an enormous mass of erudition about his theme or in overwhelming his pedantic targets with an avalanche of their own jargon. The tendency of the form to expand into an encyclopedic farrago is most clearly marked, as we should expect, in Rabelais, notably in the great catalogues of torcheculs and epithets of codpieces and methods of divination. The encyclopedic compilations produced in the line of duty by Erasmus and Voltaire suggest that a magpie instinct to collect facts is not unrelated to the type of ability that has made them famous as artists.

This creative treatment of exhaustive erudition is the organizing principle of the greatest Menippean satire in English before Swift, Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy*. Here human society is studied in terms of the intellectual pattern provided by the conception of melancholy, a symposium of books replaces dialogue, and the result is the most comprehensive survey of human life in one book that English literature had seen since Chaucer, one of Burton's favorite authors. We may note in passing the Utopia in his introduction and his "digressions," which when examined turn out to be scholarly distillations of Menippean forms: the digression of air, of the marvelous journey; the digression of spirits, of the ironic use of erudition; the digression of the miseries of scholars, of the satire on the *philosophus gloriosus*. The word "anatomy" in Burton's title means a dissection or analysis, and expresses very accurately the intellectualized approach of his form. We may as well adopt it as a convenient name to replace the cumbersome and in modern times rather misleading "Menippean satire."

The anatomy of course eventually begins to merge with the novel, producing various hybrids including the *roman à thèse* and novels in which the characters are symbols of social or other ideas, like the proletarian novels of the last decade. It was Sterne, however, the disciple of Burton and Rabelais, who combined them with greatest success. *Tristram Shandy* may be, as was said at the beginning, a novel, but the digressing narrative, the catalogues, the stylizing of character along "humor" lines, the marvelous journey of the great nose, the symposium discussions and the con-

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stant ridicule of philosophers and pedantic critics are all features that belong to the anatomy.

IV

To sum up, then: when we examine fiction from the point of view of form, we can see four chief strands binding it together, novel, confession, anatomy, and romance. The six possible combinations of these forms all exist, and we have shown how the novel has combined with each of the other three. Exclusive concentration on one form is rare: the early novels of George Eliot, for instance, are influenced by the romance, and the later ones by the anatomy. The romance-confession hybrid is found, naturally, in the autobiography of a romantic temperament, and is represented in English by George Borrow. The romance-anatomy one we have noticed in Rabelais: a fine modern example is *Moby Dick,* where the romantic theme of the wild hunt expands into an encyclopedic anatomy of the whale. Confession and anatomy are united in *Sartor Resartus.* More comprehensive fictional schemes usually employ at least three forms: we can see strains of novel, romance, and confession in *Pamela,* of novel, romance, and anatomy in *Don Quixote,* of novel, confession, and anatomy in Proust, and of romance, confession, and anatomy in Apuleius.

I deliberately make this sound schematic in order to suggest the advantage of having a simple and logical explanation for the form of, say, *Moby Dick* or *Tristram Shandy.* The usual critical approach to the *form* of such works resembles that of the doctors in Brobdingnag, who after great wrangling finally pronounced Gulliver a *lusus naturae.* It is the anatomy in particular that has baffled critics, and there is hardly any fiction writer deeply influenced by it who has not been accused of disorderly conduct. As for the question which so many feel it necessary to ask at this point, whether Melville or Sterne "knew" that they were combining an anatomy form with a romance or a novel, the answer is, as usual, yes and no. They knew what they were doing, but they knew as creators know, not as critics explain.

The reader may be reminded here of Joyce, for describing his

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books as monstrous has become a nervous tic. I find "demogorgon," "behemoth," and "white elephant" in good critics; the bad ones could probably do much better. The care that Joyce took to organize *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake* amounted nearly to obsession, but as they are not organized on familiar principles of prose fiction, the impression of shapelessness remains. Let us try our formulas on him.

If a reader were asked to set down a list of the things that had most impressed him about *Ulysses,* it might reasonably be somewhat as follows. First, the clarity with which the sights and sounds and smells of Dublin come to life, the rotundity of the character-drawing and the naturalness of the dialogue. Second, the elaborate way that the story and characters are parodied by being set against archetypal heroic patterns, notably the one provided by the Odyssey. Third, the revelation of character and incident through the searching use of the stream-of-consciousness technique. Fourth, the constant tendency to be encyclopedic and exhaustive both in technique and in subject matter, and to see both in highly intellectualized terms. It should not be too hard for us by now to see that these four points describe elements in the book which relate to the novel, romance, confession, and anatomy respectively. *Ulysses,* then, is a complete prose epic with all four forms employed in it, all of practically equal importance, and all essential to one another, so that the book is a unity and not an aggregate.

This unity is built up from an intricate scheme of parallel contrasts. The romantic archetypes of Hamlet and Ulysses are like remote stars in a literary heaven looking down quizzically on the shabby creatures of Dublin obediently intertwining themselves in the patterns set by their influences. In the "Cyclops" and "Circe" episodes particularly there is a continuous parody of realistic patterns by romantic ones which reminds us, though the irony leans in the opposite direction, of *Madame Bovary.* The relation of novel and confession techniques is similar: the author jumps into his characters' minds to follow their stream of consciousness, and out again to describe them externally. In the novel-anatomy combination, too, found in the "Ithaca" chapter, the

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sense of lurking antagonism between the personal and intellectual aspects of the scene accounts for much of its pathos. The same principle of parallel contrast holds good for the other three combinations: of romance and confession in "Nausicaa" and "Penelope," of confession and anatomy in "Proteus" and "The Lotos-Eaters," of romance and anatomy (a rare and fitful combination) in "Sirens" and parts of "Circe."

In *Finnegans Wake* the unity of design goes far beyond this. The dingy story of the sodden HCE and his pinched wife is not contrasted with the archetypes of Tristram and the divine king: HCE is himself Tristram and the divine king. As the setting is a dream, no contrast is possible between confession and novel, between a stream of consciousness inside the mind and the appearances of other people outside it. Nor is the existential world of the novel to be separated from the intelligible world of the anatomy. The forms we have been isolating in fiction, and which depend for their existence on the common-sense dichotomies of the daylight consciousness, vanish in *Finnegans Wake* into a fifth and quintessential form.

All that we have space to say of this fifth form is that it is the one traditionally associated with scriptures and sacred books, and treats life in terms of the fall and awakening of the human soul and the creation and apocalypse of nature. The Bible is of course the definitive example of it: the Egyptian Book of the Dead and the Icelandic Prose Edda, both of which have left deep imprints on *Finnegans Wake*, also belong to it. Perhaps we could see tendencies to this form in Joyce's masters, "stern swift and jolly roger" (Rabelais), if we were to read them as Joyce did. To go further would exceed our present objective, which is merely to give an explanation of some literary phenomena that appear to need it.

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CHRONICLES

DeMille's Folk Epic

GEORGE BARBAROW

SAMSON AND DELILAH, a "Biblical spectacle," the favorite genre of Cecil B. DeMille, plentifully exhibits characteristics of nearly all the films made by this Hollywood veteran whose career has been almost continuously profitable since *The Squaw Man* (1913), and whose work is more edifying, cinematically, than has generally been supposed. His latest picture is, as expected, coarse, raw, garish, oversimple; it is also vivid and violent. In short, *Samson and Delilah* is vulgar; but the vulgarity of this film inspires more admiration than revulsion, for along with flamboyance there is refreshing freedom from the sickly pretensions and genteel artiness which, in Laurence Olivier's films, destroys Shakespeare, and which infects the numberless transcriptions of plays (themselves pallid Broadway products) annually distributed to "adult" movie audiences. *Samson and Delilah* is not pretentious, except in two places where DeMille attempts to instruct us in philosophy and religion: with his own recorded voice accompanying the opening shots of the distant earth and shots of Technicolored clouds; and with Samson's lines explaining the strong man's "invisible" God to Delilah. The differences between Olivier and DeMille are evident in their work. Olivier pandered to officially approved cultural aspirations and refined *Hamlet* into a state of feeble confusion, while DeMille, making no play for the acclaim of public librarians and high school English departments, has turned out a big picture that has impressive strength and abundant vitality. DeMille has the means and the energy to create something original in the process of satisfying his own conceptions and imitation is not part of the process; although he plainly respects the authority of the Bible, he very properly knows that Judges 13-16 is one way of telling the Samson legend and a movie is another way, so he does not hesitate to rearrange literature while Olivier struggles to preserve it. *Samson and Delilah* is a genuine movie which demands criticism on its own terms; to do this, and to discover the nature of DeMille's achievement, we must hold in abeyance the kind of acquired prejudice that often prevents our recognizing the aesthetic value of illustrations by Doré or prints by Posada. Looking at *Samson and Delilah* as vernacular art, the art of the common people, we suddenly see that this film has cinematic power and essential dignity.

The physical strength of Samson provides the strength of DeMille's film. The visualization of the legendary feats, presented in harsh, glaring Technicolor,

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are infused with horrendous magnificence, especially in the sequence of the "jawbone" slaughter in the narrow defile at Lehi. Moreover, the constant use of drastic visual contrast throughout the picture is thoroughly appropriate to the representation of conflicts that are in themselves merciless and barbaric. The extraordinary costumes and grotesque luxury of the Philistines cannot be condemned superficially as "meretricious lavishness," for the glitter is dynamically balanced by the other extreme, the dingy clothing and poverty of the Danites. What is significant about this eye-blasting contrast is its harmony with the spirit of the Old Testament, pregnant with *wrath* and saturated with *blood*. A coating of politeness (good manners, understatement, elegance, delicacy) applied to this rude and angry war could make it intolerably pastel.

And *Samson and Delilah* also arouses pity, the kind of pity we associate with the catastrophes of folk epics as distinguished from tragedies. Samson does not possess the exquisite insight and scope of vision required of a tragic hero; although a tragic treatment is implied in the Bible (the Biblical Samson "judged Israel in the days of the Philistines twenty years"), DeMille is content to show the Samson of the common estimation, a man famous for his God-given physical strength, and this too is in keeping with the vernacular character of the film. When the blinded hero "makes sport" for the crowd in the Philistine temple, this great figure, who has previously been a mixture of rustic comedian and arrogant fool, is suddenly vested with terrifying pathos, for the sport consists of the tripping and pricking of the helpless giant by a swarm of dwarfs. The fascination in watching the inhuman trickery of these brightly dressed creatures is not primarily a relish for the sort of entertainment that the crowd of Philistines finds funny. A correct discrimination is made. By the visual arrangement of this sequence, the movie spectator is forced to see that the "sport," which is horrible, has not been placed on the screen in order to be enjoyed by sadists for its own sake, and this is the climactic contrast of the film. The "game" is clearly the visual projection of the screen-mob's animal cruelty; and at once the stumbling Samson, enmeshed in a ridiculous, gracelessly draped, red net, still patiently attempting to escape from the humiliating folds of his "dilemma," becomes the object of immeasurable sympathy *without losing dignity*. This sympathy is invoked at the right moment, which is shortly before the hero performs his final, most devastating, feat.

All this is not to say that *Samson and Delilah* is free of defects, one of the most serious of which is DeMille's failure to show all of Samson's feats of strength, although mentioning most of them in the dialogue. To talk about a sensational event in a movie is no substitute for showing it; indeed, the verbal reference is often worse than leaving out cinematic material altogether. DeMille shows four of the familiar exploits and includes three newly invented displays of muscle power, but he makes the mistake of dialogue reference to several

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others, and the mention, constituting a reminder that we cannot see them, is a severe disappointment.

The slighting of Samson's adventures is also a reminder that the film is about Samson *and Delilah,* with an expanded heroine, very well cast in the person of Hedy Lamarr. This new arrangement of the Samson story, although weaker than the emphasis upon the solitary gigantic figure celebrated in the Book of Judges, nevertheless carries some conviction of its own. Delilah's image, reflecting more intelligence than is usually allotted to sirens, is an adequate contrast in two directions: to the essentially rural hero, and to the absurd gilt fripperies of the Philistines. Lamarr wears the conventionally ornate costumes of the movie temptress with unexpected grace, and the heroine's casual carelessness with expensive luxuries is also unexpected, and appropriate to the more complex function of the new Delilah. The standard screen vampire has no dimensions beyond pettishness or bitchy boredom; this one takes an active part in the direction of the events; she is, moreover, a dignified Delilah, which is no mean accomplishment for even an experienced moviemaker, given the shrieking gaudiness of the Philistine court. One small example is the shot of Delilah holding up for Samson's inspection a dull-green plate of intricate and (for once) respectable design; we look first at the plate, and then are forced to compare this circular prop with Delilah's oval face; immediately we notice that the face dominates both the plate and the shot. The shot is simple, subtle, a point-maker; if DeMille were indeed the *mere* sensationalist he is often reputed to be, he could not have included a shot of such deceptive simplicity in the right place in the scene, a shot intimately related to the visual design of the whole film, taken from an effective viewpoint, and held on the screen for the right length of time. This shot is no accident, for there are others that are also effective and harmonious, a *number* of others; their presence argues professional ability and imagination not often discernible in modern films.

DeMille's control of the movie medium (and he does have control; he is one of the very few Hollywood moviemakers who exercise the old-fashioned directorial prerogative of dominating every detail of a film) is somewhat weakened by theatricalism, occasionally inspired, and usually skillful. A number of the scenes waste time, time that could be better used for showing more of Samson's famous actions, by being held too close to stagy time-and-place unities, and too much of the intrigue and the motivation of characters is presented by the lazy means of speech. But *Samson and Delilah* is constantly reminding us that this is a picture that will bear inspection, that it is something to look at closely The sound and the speech are relatively insignificant beside a visual emphasis that favors viewpoint, action, movement. There is shot composition in this Technicolor "spectacle" that is uncluttered enough to be cut easily without shock. And even when the construction of a scene is theatrical, the cutting

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progresses: the repetition of the subject (actor) which is unavoidable in such scenes is seldom accompanied by repetition of the original shot. When shots are repeated, it is not because the director can't think up another one; it is for emphasis, when the shot has importance as a symbol to be reinforced, such as the view of the King on his throne, posed against a red curtain on which is arranged a golden sunburst device that can only be described as *bright*. We are not drugged by the constant reappearance of identical weak shots which, along with listless pannings across a scene of no visual interest simply to pick up bits of talk, is standard practice these days. The spectator at a DeMille film comes to expect a new shot each time, and gets it. We cannot be bored by this continuing stream of fresh images unless we are cinematically insensitive, and thus incapable of understanding what is going on moviewise, or unless we are constitutionally unsympathetic to vulgar art even when it is well made.

The stream of fresh images on the screen, characteristic of a genuine movie, keeps the spectator alert; moreover, DeMille's design of the shots and their relationship is, much more often than not, interesting and effective in *Samson and Delilah*. If the pace is at times plodding, if the talk appears trivial and wasteful, if we are disappointed by the incompleteness of the visualization of Samson's feats, we must nevertheless respect DeMille's competence and admit our admiration for some moments that are very powerful: the slaughter of the Philistine soldiers and the baiting of the blind Samson. This film is not only serious, but it also contains evidence that DeMille's hold on the mass audience is founded on something more solid than a vague, mysterious "flair for showmanship," which is the usual explanation for the large profits he has made. DeMille's awareness of the popular temper should not be turned into an excuse for ignoring his extraordinary knowledge of the movie medium.

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REVIEWS

Two Views of the American Writer

1. THE DEFLOWERING OF NEW ENGLAND

STANLEY EDGAR HYMAN

THINGS HAVE REACHED the point where we can look back longingly on a time when the American literary heritage was ignored and derided. Better that it fade and mildew on the shelves, certainly, waiting for an unfashionable customer, than that it lie shopworn on the counter, smeared by too many dirty thumbs, pulled out of shape by too many foredoomed fittings, rent by too many rival shoppers. The production of books about America's writers is a booming infant industry second only to television, and a craze that need not bow to pinwheel beanies. Are Emerson, Thoreau, Hawthorne, Melville, James, and Adams—to choose six reasonably at random—really that important to us? They are among our nineteenth-century masters, they may be our six greatest prose artists, they are a large part of the great and celebrated American Renaissance, the notorious "flowering" of New England (with a little prodding and lopping, even Melville and James can be made honorary citizens of Massachusetts), but are they really of any significance to us now? A selection from the recent crop of books about one or the other of them numbers eleven,[1] and suggests something of an answer to that question.

Ralph L. Rusk's *The Life of Ralph Waldo Emerson* is the definitive life, written by the world's foremost authority—508 pages of text, 42 pages of notes giving sources page by page, 40 pages of index and bibliography. Rusk has devoted many years to Emerson, editing his letters, following his path around the world, exhaustively exploring sources no biographer had seen in more than half a century. His biography, which aims at being "not merely a book about Emerson, but one fit to be called his life," guarantees its academic impeccability

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[1]THE LIFE OF RALPH WALDO EMERSON, by *Ralph L. Rusk*. Scribners. $6.00; HENRY DAVID THOREAU, by *Joseph Wood Krutch*. Sloane. $3.50; PASSAGE TO WALDEN, by *Reginald L. Cook*. Houghton Mifflin. $3.00; NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE, by *Randall Stewart*. Yale University Press. $4.00; NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE: THE AMERICAN YEARS, by *Robert Cantwell*. Rinehart. $6.00; NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE, by *Mark Van Doren*. Sloane. $3.50; HAWTHORNE'S LAST PHASE, by *Edward Hutchins Davidson*. Yale University Press. $3.75; MELVILLE'S USE OF THE BIBLE, by *Nathalia Wright*. Duke University Press. $3.50; THE LEGEND OF THE MASTER: HENRY JAMES, edited by *Simon Nowell-Smith*. Scribners. $3.00; HENRY JAMES AND THE EXPANDING HORIZON, by *Osborn Andreas*. University of Washington Press. $3.50; THE YOUNG HENRY ADAMS, by *Ernest Samuels*. Harvard University Press. $4.50.

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by being written in the dullest and most lifeless fashion imaginable. It is full of useless and meaningless lists and enormous genealogies, it is maddeningly repetitive, and it assumes the reader's idiocy as a matter of course (Boston is identified as "the capital of Massachusetts," Francis Bacon as "the Elizabethan"). It is also wickedly biased in favor of the Southern version of history, blaming the abolitionists for "the blood bath of a fratricidal war," and identifying Reconstruction as "madness," "criminal," "dangerous," and a "disgrace." Rusk's few attempts at criticism, outlining and explaining the *Essays* and interpreting the poetry, are as superficial as we would expect of a man who believes that Emerson wrote "hardly a poem that did not have some rare excellence," and describes John Muir as "a kind of ecstatic Thoreau." Where Rusk is good it is in such purely scholarly pursuits as running down the sources of "The American Scholar" in Emerson's letters and journals, and where he is effective it seems to be through unconscious irony, as in his perfect, and certainly unintentional, description of Emerson's cold second marriage:

> Lidian and her husband soon succeeded in accustoming themselves to a domesticity that proved a lasting bond between them, and it seemed probable that their common interest in ideas was destined to contribute quite as much to their mutual happiness.

Here, in other words, is a giant mausoleum, but dead or alive, Emerson isn't in it.

Joseph Wood Krutch's *Henry David Thoreau*, the first volume in Sloane's new American Men of Letters series, is, despite serious limitations, far the best of the first three volumes published in the series, and probably (although this is pathetically weak praise) the best study of Thoreau we have so far had. The book's chief flaw is Krutch's insistence that Thoreau is primarily important for his ideas, for "what he had to say," that is, as a "teacher" of social reform or nature love, rather than as a writer or prose artist.[2] Only in the last chapter does Krutch concede, somewhat gracelessly, that "Thoreau was, after all, a writer almost as much as he was a reformer or a 'savage'," and then, this wrung from him, he goes on to introduce an excellent brief discussion of Thoreau's prose style. Krutch would seem particularly susceptible to this extra-literary emphasis because of a scarcely-concealed identification of his own nature writings, as represented by *Twelve Seasons*, with those of the master. Thus we get the comedy of Krutch's constant affirmation of Thoreau's "sympathy with actual wildness," reinforced by a quote from *A Week* that represents Thoreau at his woolliest, playing Indian—as though Concord were a jungle like Fairfield County, and Thoreau hadn't walked home from the pond every day to see his

[2]I have tried to state this heretic view of Thoreau as primarily influential as an artist at some length in a study, "Henry Thoreau In Our Time," in *The Atlantic* for November 1946. Thoreau himself wrote flatly in his journal, "My work is writing," but no one seems to have taken him seriously.

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mother. Krutch is unsympathetic to much of the high hope of mid-century New England, finding elements of the "merely lunatic" in Fruitlands and Brook Farm, and reducing Thoreau's philosophy to simple hedonism; he is curiously uninformed, and doesn't know, for example, that it was Aunt Maria who paid Henry's tax and got him out of the poky, although his chief biographical source is Canby's *Thoreau,* where that information is given; and he has the annoying habit of striving for topicality by such devices as calling Transcendentalism "a sort of failure of nerve," and the even more disturbing ability to summon up Thoreau's reactions to the modern world, so that "the 'scientific morality' of the positivist would have disgusted him" and "It is as difficult to imagine Thoreau a Freudian as it is to imagine him a Marxian" (or a Krutchian, for that matter). Nevertheless, so much in *Henry David Thoreau* is excellent, from such shrewd insights as defining Crusoe as "the old daydream of life in the golden age" and the distinction among Thoreau's reactions to the three aspects of Venus, to the full and dialectic treatments of such gnarled problems as Thoreau's relationship to writing, society and politics, and sex, that we cannot help being grateful for Krutch's book.

We are under no such compulsion in regard to Reginald L. Cook's *Passage to Walden.* Cook is a professor of American literature at Middlebury College, and he must surely be the most outdoorsy English teacher in the business. The aim of his book is "to penetrate the essential quality and evoke the richness of his [Thoreau's] correspondence with nature," and through this to clarify "the cultivation of the human spirit" expressed in his writings. Cook writes of Thoreau, "His prose has the twang of bow-thongs, an edge like that of a whetted blade, and, as in the John Brown address, a bayonet's stab," but Cook's own prose has the twang of wet gingersnap, and about as much edge or stabbing point as an old overshoe. He goes after the worthy objective of his aim by lengthy comparison of Thoreau with seven "other naturalists," the level of which can best be suggested in Cook's own summary:

> In reaction to nature each has a memorable quality: Walton is buoyant; White sensible; Thoreau intense; Jefferies rapturous; Muir fervid; Burroughs equable; Fabre clairvoyant; Hudson expectant. The effect of their work upon the reader is another matter. Walton is beguiling; White instructive; Thoreau provocative; Jefferies reanimating; Muir infectious; Burroughs informative; Fabre fascinating; Hudson exhilarating.

Cook travesties Thoreau as a "nature mystic" whose writings celebrate "the simple life"; he misquotes him at any opportunity; he gives us a *Walden* "directed to the general reader who is interested in discussions of books, people, house-building, work, ethics, and economics interspersed with talks of trees, birds, beanfields, pickerel, and the Pond," and takes the *Walden* bookkeeping seriously; and his tone throughout is one of uncritical and cheery adulation. In the space of a page, Thoreau is fixed by comparisons with Gauguin, Newman, Proust, Rousseau, Yeats, Adams, and Cabell; like Krutch, on a lower level,

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Cook knows just what his boy would have thought of the National Parks program (pro), the National Wildlife Federation (pro, but "tardy"), Lawrence's blood-thinking (anti), and so forth; and he writes a jargon typified by the description of Thoreau as a "percipient sensibilitist," alternated with baby-talk. Since Cook's reverse prescience is catching, let us say that this book would have made Henry writhe.

Randall Stewart's *Nathaniel Hawthorne*, the first of four recent Hawthorne studies, is, like Rusk's book, the definite biography by the foremost authority. As Rusk came to his biography through editing Emerson's letters, Stewart arrived at his after years of work on Hawthorne's notebooks, which he edited for publication. His style is old-fashioned, courtly, and frequently corny, giving Hawthorne a "fun-loving disposition," like a Rover Boy, and writing of Sophia: "she was of sensibility all compact, and her physical distress was a constant challenge to her robust suitor, stimulating his sympathies and the protective instinct." Stewart's few attempts at literary criticism in the book are weak and superficial, particularly a criticism of the stories which opposes those that are "authentic New England history and therefore creditable" to those that are "fantasy and therefore less easy to accept," and Stewart seems to make something we might call Puritanist Realism his aesthetic criterion. Nevertheless, Stewart properly centers Hawthorne's work on "varieties of . . . estrangement" and "the problem of evil," and if his book were not so concerned with refuting earlier distortions of Hawthorne as a solitary brooder by a counter-distortion exaggerating Hawthorne's normality and happiness, he could have gone ahead with the real job, tying these themes in the work to the life. As it is, he has provided the materials from which any future interpretation must work.

A biography, or the first half of one, that appeared almost simultaneously with Stewart's, Robert Cantwell's *Nathaniel Hawthorne: The American Years*, shows the kind of thing Stewart managed to avoid. Cantwell's book is torpedoed and sunk by his fixed idea that all the mysteries of Hawthorne's life can be cleared up on the assumption, based on no shred of evidence, that he was a secret government agent, probably a confidential operative for the Treasury. Cantwell, an ex-Luce employee with an eye for news, enlivens his thesis with such minor distortions as a portrait of the Manning family as the villains in Hawthorne's life and one of Horatio Bridge as a cynical opportunist; a conviction that the timid puns in Hawthorne's journals and letters are a secret code; the curious idea that Hawthorne's signing letters in college "Oberon" meant that he was king of the fairies (what would Cantwell do with James's signing himself "Henrietta" to children?); and a readiness to read incidents in the fiction as facts in the life. Add to this a habit like Rusk's of patronizing the reader ("The two parties at that time were called Federalist and Anti-Federalist"), a style like spaghetti (Sophia Peabody "was destined to become, when she grew up, Hawthorne's wife"), no scruples against quoting out of

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context, and a fine bouquet of misreadings, dubious datings, padding, flat misstatements, repetitions, and sloppy internal contradictions (on page 72, room rent at Bowdoin was $8 a term, "extremely expensive by the standards of the time, and more than was paid at Harvard"; by page 95, it is tuition that was $8 a term, and room rent $3.74). The prose is on the order of "She was a child of nature, and, obeying nature, she was free without indelicacy, innocent as naked Eve"; the metaphor is of the type of "bloodhound ferocity"; and the criticism is on the level of finding Hawthorne's stories as good as Poe's, while healthier. Aside from a few incidental insights, like the observation that all Hawthorne's portraits made him look like a poet and all his photographs like a descendant of sea captains, and one or two felicitous phrases, the best of them the description of Hawthorne as "a prosecuting attorney of the imagination," this book is worthless: absurd as biography, inadequate as criticism, and infuriating as reading. If Cantwell is at work on a second volume covering Hawthorne's later years, he would do well to forget it.

Mark Van Doren's *Nathaniel Hawthorne,* the third volume in the American Men of Letters series, is an attempt to write a true critical biography, a relating of the work to the life (for biographical information, he used the Stewart book in proof). As such, it is a flat failure, admitting in the early pages that Hawthorne is "an unusually mysterious artist" and one whose "life explains his work even less than is normally the case," then going on only to confirm those statements of limitation. Van Doren somewhat romanticizes the life (an early trip becomes an attempt "it may be, to forget Sophia if he could") without ever quite seeming to plumb it, and although his evaluations of the work are excellent and stimulating (aside from a curious *a priori* objection to *The Marble Faun* and a great underrating of *The Blithedale Romance*) they are rarely based on any more analysis than a sensitive and perceptive summary of the plot, and tend to be of a take-it-or-leave-it order. A great deal is made of "myth"—"Hawthorne's controlling myth," "the Puritan myth," "the central figure of his myth," "the delicate atmosphere of myth," "a foolish myth"—but the term is used with no consistency, and at various times means myth, legend, fable, imaginative theme, fantasy, or a lie. The book's chief, perhaps its only, virtue lies in its prose, which is intelligent, eloquent, and ingratiating, and if it is not much of a critical or biographical achievement, it is a rare example of a literary study that can be read without a sense of chewing on sand.

Hawthorne's Last Phase, by Edward Hutchins Davidson, is not literary biography, but a straight scholarly study of Hawthorne's final writings, a Ph.D. thesis done under Stanley T. Williams at Yale. It constitutes the first publication of the twenty-odd sketches and studies Hawthorne made for his last, unfinished, novels, and the book's chief value lies in Davidson's reconstruction and meticulous printing and outlining of these. We are enabled to follow the process of creation (or, pathetically, non-creation) step by step, and the

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material is endlessly fascinating. It is thus a shame that the kind of question about the drafts that Davidson asks is the ultimately categorical and biographical: What were the proper circumstances Hawthorne had to discover before he could compose a novel? Why did he fail in the last years?—rather than the far more pertinent: What can we learn, about the early work as well as about Hawthorne himself, from all this junk? These tortured plots, with their obsessive and recurrent bloody footsteps, reappearing claimants, poisonous immortality potions, corpses transmuted into golden hair, and enormous spiders, seem plots like any other to Davidson, rather than the symbolist nightmare they are. At one point, Davidson frankly describes his work as "source hunting," and there is no denying that he is more at home with textual drafts lettered A to K than with themes and symbols, but he is nevertheless a very superior sort of scholar, and his book, within limits, a very superior sort of thesis.

Nathalia Wright's *Melville's Use of the Bible,* which seems to be another Yale Ph.D. thesis done under Williams (to whom it is dedicated), is also an example of superior scholarship, and shows far more sensitivity to an aesthetic dimension than does Davidson's. Although Miss Wright's subject would seem limiting to the point of atrophy (she notes in a dispassionate footnote that other scholars have already given us *Emerson's Use of the Bible* and *Hawthorne and the Bible*), and her elaborate tabulations of Biblical allusions, references, and quotations in Melville could readily become stultifying, she manages, partially through the lucky fact that the Bible *is* intrinsic to Melville (as it is extrinsic to Emerson), and partially through her own skill, to make the subject come alive. She studies in turn four principal aspects of Bible influence in Melville's work—Imagery, Characters and Types, Themes and Plots, and Style—and is apparently much influenced by Caroline Spurgeon's work in the first and by John Livingston Lowes in the second (although neither is acknowledged). Miss Wright quotes and uses both Freud and Frazer, and has some formal critical equipment as well as sensibility and taste; her readings, particularly that of *The Confidence-Man,* are often sharp and perceptive — for example, she notes of Plinlimmon's pamphlet in *Pierre* and Father Mapple's sermon in *Moby-Dick* that each is a "précis of the plot" (what Kenneth Burke calls a "Bellerophontic letter"), and she recognizes that all Melville's works center in "the quest for the absolute." In general, her study of Bible-relationships is on a level as high as this:

> . . . four major Scriptural themes may be distinguished in his novels: the theme of prophecy in *Moby-Dick;* the theme of wisdom literature cursorily from *Mardi* to *Billy Budd;* the theme of the Gospel ethics in *Mardi, Pierre,* and *The Confidence-Man;* and the theme of the Crucifixion in *Billy Budd.*

The chief flaws in Miss Wright's book are a slighting of the short stories, some of which are far more significant than she recognizes to any discussion of the novels, and a general assumption that the Bible is a volume of Semitic history

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(although her work cries out for the recognition that it is a body of myth). Despite all the traffic, we have not had a critical or biographical study of Melville since Charles Olson's extraordinary *Call Me Ishmael* in 1947, and until we get that necessary book, brilliant peripheral jobs like Miss Wright's will probably have to content us.

A compilation by Simon Nowell-Smith, *The Legend of the Master: Henry James,* is the only one of these books that could properly be called delightful, just as it is the only one by an Englishman (this is probably a coincidence). It is a collection of anecdotes and descriptions by contemporaries of aspects of James, from his incredible appearance in tight check trousers to the persistence of his maddening manner of speech on his deathbed. Some of the passages are uproariously funny, some are more than a little improbable, a few are enormously revealing. Much of the later pompous manner and dress is explained by W. Graham Robertson's statement that in 1895 in London, James looked so unremarkable that Robertson's mother, an admirer of his work, could never remember when she met him who he was; some of the late style is explained by the account of his habits in dictating. The puzzling biographical problem of his relations to women is amply documented in the book, if no closer to a solution, and the testimony ranges from George Moore's statement that James watched women with a purely literary interest, to Elizabeth Robins' story that at a party at Grosvenor House, when the lights went on again after a temporary failure of power, thirteen ladies were discovered clinging to Henry James. The book is actually, of course, the flesh of a biography without its skeletal structure of fact, and Nowell-Smith's long introduction, "The Legend," describing his difficulties in sifting truth from falsehood in the material, is a warning about the pretty dubieties of oral tradition, even when the subject is contemporary or nearly so, that could be properly read and taken to heart by all writers of literary biography. Besides this brief gem, the book includes a useful chronology of the life and works, and some fascinating illustrations, among them the astounding LaFarge picture of James as a very Keatsian young man.

Henry James and the Expanding Horizon, by Osborn Andreas, is subtitled "A Study of the Meaning and Basic Themes of James's Fiction." It is actually a series of reductive plot synopses (Andreas prefers to call them "concise interpretive summaries") of almost every single piece of fiction James wrote, organized into schematic, slipshod, and meaningless categories. The synopses themselves, which insist on *the* meaning, are almost obscenely inept; surely no one who has ever read James so poorly has thought he liked the writings and determined to publish a book about them. Certainly James's plots are not his strongest feature; one has only to recall the women who go blind by refusing to wear unsightly eyeglasses that would prevent their catching Lord Iffield, or the lovers who dare not marry because of an ancient family curse that has killed one member of each couple since the Crusades. Even if Andreas had understood

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the plots and paraphrased them well, he would be no nearer James's serious concerns; as it is, he has compiled a horrible example for all time. Andreas attacks modern criticism as un-Jamesian at several points in the book, but surely no modern critic ever wrote anything like:

> This ambitious, all-embracing, and unrestricted conception in James of the universal relevance inherent in the methodology of the aesthetic function marks him as one artist who is a great humanist also.

The categories under which Andreas classifies the stories are equally ridiculous, including stories representing the six degrees of "emotional cannibalism"—"arrogant moral opinion, meddling, parasitism, coercion, exploitation, revenge"—and are entirely inconsistent, so that the interference, represented by the character who "takes it upon herself," that is emotional cannibalism in one chapter, becomes "consideration for others" in the next. The height of something is probably reached in Andreas' monstrous exaggeration of Edmund Wilson's cockeyed reading of "The Turn of the Screw," which begins:

> The governess, in *The Turn of the Screw* (1898), subjects Flora and Miles, the nine- and ten-year old girl and boy who have been delivered into her power, to all the vagaries of her progressively more and more deranged mind, until through sheer terror Flora goes into a delirium with brain fever, and Miles, harder pressed than Flora, is literally scared to death. This harrowing story of the obsessive and rapacious emotional devouring of two innocent children by an emotionally avid governess is intensified by the tenderness with which the two children, vaguely realizing the pathological nature of their governess's malady, parry and avoid taking issue with their persecutor's mania.

Andreas, like Cantwell, is an amateur in the field, a retired businessman with an interest in literature. His book, as this summary suggests, is unmitigated trash, and the University of Washington Press should be ashamed of itself for publishing it. An incompetent and ridiculous work of this sort probably does more to bring the University into disrepute than any six Communists on the faculty, and if the administration is looking for subversion of academic standards, let it keep an eye on alumni businessmen with an in at the press.

The best book of the batch, Ernest Samuels' *The Young Henry Adams*, is, like the Cantwell, only the first half of a biography, but in this case we can earnestly hope for a continuation. The chief limitation of Samuels' book is that he doesn't really find Adams much to his taste or have a great deal of concern for his plight. If he sees him in a cold light, however, it is a clear one, and he makes up for his lack of sympathy by fairly stating his bias against the "Brahmin view," and by not riding his own hobby horse, Marx, past the point of relevance. Samuels takes Adams only from his college days to the publication of the *History*, with his chief interest in correcting the distortions and posturings of the *Education*, and he manages to make those years almost as fascinating as the *Education* does, and considerably more trustworthy. Samuels is

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the only one of the authors under discussion who has gone to the trouble of studying his subject's rewriting for style, of treating prose as an aesthetic form, and his analysis does a good deal to define the power of Adams' writing. Samuels' own writing is vertebrate and excellent, if somewhat repetitive; he is a genuine critic with an interest, for example, in "the development of revolutionary techniques in psychological analysis" as well as a biographer; and he has written a book good enough to suggest the finer book he could write about a man he found more compatible.

II

The only useful classification of these eleven books would be functional, according to techniques for disposing of the body. If we assume that our great American writers are dangerous, that they retain a magic so powerful that they are still a threat to peaceful college teaching or Lucethought, that they have to be interred and held down forcibly in the earth, heaped with rocks like Thoreau's cairn at Walden, then these techniques open up some possibilities. One can mummify the writer, with Rusk; or substitute a straw man, with Krutch; or castrate him, with Cook; or kidnap him for the Boy Scouts, with Stewart; or mutilate him beyond recognition, with Cantwell; or perfume him a little, with Van Doren; or dissect him and concentrate on a kidney or a left leg, with Davidson and Miss Wright; or serve him up to us all gravy and no roast, with Nowell-Smith; or flay him and make his skin into lampshades, with Andreas; or just give him enough rope to hang himself, with Samuels.

We cannot say fairly that none of these books gives us the whole man, since obviously no book could, but let us insist that if they give us a partial man it be one more to our purposes, that if they must oversimplify, they oversimplify to some valid essence. They are all so very genteel. Where in Rusk's book, for example, is the Emerson who wrote of John Quincy Adams: "He is no literary old gentleman, but a bruiser, and loves the *mêlée*. . . . He is an old roué who cannot live on slops, but must have sulphuric acid in his tea"? Where in Krutch's book, not to speak of Cook's, is the Thoreau who said he felt like seizing the world by the neck and holding it under water like a dog until it drowned? Where, in any of the four Hawthorne books, is the Hawthorne who wrote of the inmates of a boardinghouse "And yet these men are alive, and talk of real matters, and matters which they know"? Miss Wright begins her study by quoting Melville's prediction that "if another Messiah ever comes twill be in Shakespeare's person," but the Melville of that terrifying heresy never reappears in the book. Nowell-Smith's James is admittedly only the man his contemporaries (most of them English) saw, but it comes as a shock when we learn from Edith Wharton that James thought Whitman "the greatest of American poets" and loved to chant his work aloud. Only Samuels has been successful perhaps, in capturing the essence of his man, and even he hasn't quite given us the Adams

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who could advise a contributor to *The North American Review*, by way of suggesting the sort of article he wanted, "Stand on your head and spit at someone." Where, in other words, are living writers with guts inside them instead of manuscript paper?

These men are doubly important to us: as writers working in America (or outside it) their example can guide us as we face the same problems; at the same time that their existence a century ago has very much altered the problems, and made it either easier for us to do certain things, or unnecessary. "Neither the New Testament nor Poor Richard speaks to our condition," Thoreau wrote in his journal, but the journal, or those parts of it Thoreau called "sentences uttered with your back to the wall," still *does* speak to our condition. What we ask of these oracles, in so many words, is how the writer functions in America. Economically, must he live off a wife or two, like Emerson, or on inherited property, like Adams and James? If not, must he take a hack job, an underripe political plum (in our day, journalistic plum), whether arduous like Melville's or relatively easy like Hawthorne's? Can he actually simplify his life, as Thoreau did, enough to live by a minimum of labor, at a time when the only possible version of Thoreau's slogan is "Complify! Complify! Complify!"? Must our writers still expatriate themselves, like James, or live straddling two continents, like Adams, or renew themselves periodically by travel abroad, like Emerson, Hawthorne, and Melville, or can they remain contentedly parochial in their own land, like Thoreau again? Must the writer, in fact, leave Concord for Boston?

Assuming that the writer will live, somehow, somewhere, how and what is he to write? Can he find his form early and stick to it, as Hawthorne did with fiction, or must he move restlessly back and forth between poetry and prose, with Emerson and Thoreau, or go whoring after the theater, like James, or interrupt a respectable non-fiction career, like Adams, to write shamefaced novels, of which he prefers "any dozen pages" to all his proper work? Shall he stay close to his experience, to ask the old chestnut, and what does "close to experience" mean, anyway—is *Walden* actually closer to experience than *The Ambassadors*, or *The Blithedale Romance* than *Moby-Dick*? What are the writer's relations to be to his fellows? Can they rest on a basis of solid mutual respect, like those between Hawthorne and Melville, or be friendly with an edge of patronizing on both sides, like those between Emerson and Thoreau, or amicable but wary, like those between James and Adams? Why could James appreciate Hawthorne so magnificently, and find Thoreau "imperfect, unfinished, inartistic"; how could Emerson get the idea that neither Hawthorne nor Thoreau had ever quite panned out as a writer; what led Hawthorne to find Thoreau "the most tedious, tiresome, and intolerable" fellow alive, yet to brood so obsessively over his death? All these writers seem to have given each other plots and ideas, to have found jobs for one another and gotten one another's work published and puffed, but on the deeper level of community of mind, had

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they as much influence on each other as they had on men they never saw?

What can these writers tell us of the relation of the artist, *as artist*, to politics? Even the word "politics" means one thing in the case of Hawthorne, a machine Democrat in Salem getting political jobs; another in the case of Adams, descendant of Presidents and high-level maneuverer; a third in the case of Emerson, lecturing the citizens of Concord on the iniquities of the Fugitive Slave Law. What has happened in the half-century between Thoreau's renouncing his allegiance to the state rhetorically in "Civil Disobedience" and James renouncing his citizenship quite literally with a recommendation from the Prime Minister of Great Britain "that he could both talk and write English"? If New England has decayed (and who, living and working in it, would dare to say that it hasn't?) has it any relation to this substitution of the real act for the symbolic one? Finally, there is the embarrassing and confusing question of the private and domestic lives of these writers, that is, not to put too fine a point on it, sex. On a scale of healthy and normal domestic life, Thoreau, priggish, terrified of women, dependent on his mother, and frigidly ascetic, would be at the bottom, followed closely by the spinsterish James; and Hawthorne and Adams, both of them fortunate in storybook marriages (until the death of Marian Adams) would be somewhere at the top. And yet, dare we say that the latter lives were fuller, or rounder, or even happier? Wouldn't a scale of tough-mindedness, of living in ecological balance with the world and dying with a minimum of whining be just as apt to run the other way? If Emerson's first marriage was passionate, short-lived, and tragic, and his second cold, long-lived, fecund, and contented, which one helped his work? What *is* the condition of "health" for the artist, is there any, and how would we know it if we saw it?

All these foolish examination-essay questions (discuss in five hundred words or less, use one side of the paper only) travesty the sort of thing we really want to know. The real questions are unaskable: what *good* is Emerson to us now, has Melville any use, will Thoreau help us if we call on him, can Adams feed us in the wilderness? How did they live, what did they *really* do, what were they *essentially*, how can we get to *be* them? What *is* the meaning of the American experience, of the American literary experience, of being a writer in this maddening country? We waste our time going through these well-bred critical biographies and literary studies with questions of this sort. All that the first three books published in the American Men of Letters series have told us (the third is Emery Neff's disappointing *Edwin Arlington Robinson*) is what it is like to be an English professor at Columbia, and all that the rest of the series as announced (with two or three honorable exceptions) seems apt to tell us is what it is like to be a *Nation* contributor in addition (by an odd coincidence, the Board of Editors consists of overlapping Columbia professors and *Nation* editors).

Perhaps the critical biography, at least of American writers, is just an

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impossible form. The old American Men of Letters series, published by Houghton Mifflin about the turn of the century, foolish and outmoded as much of it is, had many things of value. The authors were themselves men of literary stature, like Oliver Wendell Holmes on Emerson, or they had known the subject in person, like Frank Sanborn on Thoreau, or they had something to say that had not been said before, like Thomas Wentworth Higginson on Margaret Fuller. Yet none of them, certainly, is what we want and need, and even the best of them can no longer, in Thoreau's phrase, speak to our condition. A few isolated critical biographies of American literary men have been successful, the most imposing of them James's study of Hawthorne in the English Men of Letters series (for special reasons of sympathy and identification), and in recent years Newton Arvin's *Hawthorne* and neo-Marxist *Whitman* have been models of how much, within limits, the form can achieve. The blight on most of the recent efforts in the field has been the influence of Van Wyck Brooks's *Ordeal of Mark Twain* and *Pilgrimage of Henry James,* with their truncations, distortions, and simplistic "social" emphasis, and such major falsifications by followers as Lewis Mumford's *Herman Melville.* It is amazing to see the Brooks doctrine still powerful enough for Van Doren to write of Hawthorne, in apparent seriousness: "He was crippled from the first, as so many Americans have been, by a suspicion of his own imagination."

Two works, however, seem to hold out hope that writing about American literary figures can yet come alive. The first of them is D. H. Lawrence's *Studies in Classic American Literature,* which cut to the heart of the American literary experience, and found it the mythic imagination. Lawrence's book has inspired few attempts along similar lines, however, except for Olson's *Call Me Ishmael* and Edward Dahlberg's egregious *Do These Bones Live?* Hawthorne's scenario for *Septimius Felton* frankly acknowledges the archetypal motif of "Medea's cauldron" in his plot (his bowdlerizing of Greek myths for children had at least served to bring them to his attention), but none of his commentators has had a comparable interest in his mythic patterns. Of all the books under discussion, only Miss Wright flatly comes to grips with the problem, and there sees it as too mechanical an operation, writing, "For economy, for universality, for suspension of historical time, for depth and dignity of association the myth is not to be matched," as though Melville chose the large economy-sized myth as one might choose a mouthwash. The other work that should have had far more of a germinating influence than it has is F. O. Matthiessen's magnificent *American Renaissance,* which not only combines brilliant literary scholarship with keen aesthetic sensibility, but combines a Marx-influenced social criticism with a recognition of the value of Lawrence's approach and a fresh ritual emphasis of his own (Matthiessen was the first to point out, so far as I know, that *Walden* is a giant rebirth rite). *American Renaissance* remains the finest, if not the only serious, book we have on the great American

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writers. Yet of these authors, only Davidson, Miss Wright, and Krutch use and acknowledge Matthiessen's work, once each.

Finally, then, we are left with eleven books of varying degrees of merit. None of them is entirely the book we want and need; some of them bear no relation to it. Like Whitman before *Leaves of Grass*, we are all simmering, simmering; who will be the new Emerson, or even the exhumer of the old Emerson, to bring us to a boil?

2. THE SHOCK OF REPETITION

R. W. B. LEWIS

THREE NEW BOOKS[1] on Herman Melville provide the occasion for looking a little further at the questions raised by Stanley Hyman: a critic who, although sometimes seeming to manipulate us into a rather sterile neo-scholastic debate about debating, is actually voicing a genuine concern for the substance and method of critical inquiry. Mr. Hyman, as I understand him, wants students of American literature to reveal to us "living writers with guts inside them"; he wants to know about the relevant intimacies of the artist's life and experience, with regard to sex, income, political allegiance, and the like; and he wants to see how personal triumphs and defeats in those respects assume the shape of a work of art. The poem or novel so approached will show, if successful, a mythic pattern which is itself the formal or symbolic version of a private ritual by which the intimacies mentioned have been identified and ordered. (There is a good deal of unpretentious Burkeianism in Mr. Hyman's demands.) This is to say that Mr. Hyman is all for seeds, psyches, and material causes; and I should confess that I am all for perfections, forms, and final causes. One can imagine Mr. Hyman impatiently dismissing an account of the heavenly vision in the *Divina Commedia* because the critic had not answered such preliminary questions as: how did Dante really behave with Beatrice? how did he feel when, as one of the six Florentine Priors, he voted to banish his good friend Guido? what was, after all, his relationship with Brunetto Latini, and how did it affect their private tutorials? Dante is not beside the point in what follows; and I am almost inclined to remind Mr. Hyman, as Virgil reminded Dante when he grew too interested in the scenes of hell, that "the desire to listen to these things is a vulgar (*bassa*) wish."

Still, the question about men like Hawthorne, Melville, and James is, of course, what is relevant and enduring in their lives and writings; and one shares

[1]THE TRYING-OUT OF MOBY-DICK, by *Howard P. Vincent*. Houghton Mifflin. $5.00; MELVILLE, by *Geoffrey Stone*. Sheed and Ward. $4.50; HERMAN MELVILLE, by *Richard Chase*. Macmillan. $4.50.

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Mr. Hyman's frustration over the frequently maddening irrelevance of literary scholarship, as it drains away meaning and vitality from the objects it so perversely examines. One wonders too at the persistently inadequate response to the three or four positively fruitful studies of American literature, the still incomparable best of which (as Mr. Hyman has been saying with entire accuracy for several years) is F. O. Matthiessen's *American Renaissance*. I suspect that the continuing neglect of these few books, the continuing disinclination to move with them in order to move beyond them, is symptomatic of a deeper trouble, a kind of willful repression affecting writers and critics alike: and something I would like to touch on, before turning to the Melville studies under immediate consideration.

American literature, like American life and politics and like the steadily flowing commentaries upon them, has suffered from the beginning from a conviction about "the sovereignty of the present generation." (I am borrowing the phrase from Daniel J. Boorstin's remarkable *The Lost World of Thomas Jefferson*.) This principle was formulated and flaunted like *Excelsior* in the writings of Tom Paine and the men around Jefferson; and it eased the painful break with the past that the political situation demanded. But as it crept more deeply into the American mind, as it began to be a first and determining principle of thought and expression, as it was reinforced by economic pressures, radical self-reliance, and the fuzzy heroics of dynamic futurism (over the first half of the nineteenth century), it produced a condition, reflected in literature and criticism, which was not short of disastrous. It produced, as Tocqueville already foresaw in the early 1830's, a literature not merely shorn of received conventions, but inherently almost incapable of generating its own. It eventuated in a situation whereby artists were separated not merely from their predecessors and from "society" (which as an entity with its own essence and internal principles simply did not exist), but worse still from each other. It encouraged a state of mind which despised memory and so not unnaturally fostered a habit of forgetfulness; and writers who had forgotten even that there was anything to remember found in their own lifetime that they did not know or could not understand the writings of their contemporaries. Emerson found Hawthorne unintelligible; James had scarcely heard of Melville; and Dreiser, coming after the strenuous efforts of all those men, and of Mark Twain and Howells, began again purely and wholly from the same sparse, starved immediacy of his own experience. Probably the most serious result of the denial of continuity has been not so much the periodic disintegration of a slowly cohering tradition, a regular relapse into chaos (for change can only be measured by permanence): but rather an exasperating stasis of artistic achievement and insight. For American writers and critics, as Lionel Trilling told us in an expression of kindly regret over the self-limitation of Sherwood Anderson, are always celebrating the twenty-first birthday party of our culture: are always

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coming of age via the shock of recognizing qualities in American experience already exposed by Emerson, Hawthorne, Melville, etc.; are never or rarely nourished, as artists and citizens, by the discoveries of the past; and manage only, by enormous and consuming energy, to hoist themselves to the level of awareness from which they should have begun. If this kind of artistic protestantism has so seriously interfered with the efforts of Anderson and, though quite a lot less so, of Cather, Hemingway and Faulkner, it has been equally damaging to the formation of a shared and growing body of critical opinion. The lost critic operating upon the rootless and solitary artist is not apt to compose the warm, communicative, and revealing book that men like Stanley Hyman are asking for. What we are more likely to get is the kind of decent burial detected by Mr. Hyman in the assortment of books he discusses. But if any American writer overcame this congenital bounding-in, if any American writer exposed himself to the currents flowing down from the past, if any writer released within himself the inherited ordering symbols (driven inward, as Jung has explained, by the protestant spirit), it was Herman Melville. Does Melville speak to our condition? Part of the evidence that he does so is the manner by which this man, who caught to himself so much of a prior tradition, has become a living ingredient in so much of a posterior tradition as has been able to endure: the appearance of Melville as a vital symbol in the poetry of Hart Crane, Auden, and Robert Lowell is the indication. Books about Melville should carry the evidence further.

II

The three studies of Melville that I am concerned with here have very different aims. Howard Vincent is interested in a literary process analogous to the trying-out or extraction of oil from blubber: the process by which Melville made poetry out of cetology. His subject is the composition of *Moby-Dick*, the transmutation of matter by form, traced very nearly line by line, with attention directed less to the literary and philosophical materials (as in Lowes's *Road to Xanadu*) than to the factual, historical, and industrial stuff. Geoffrey Stone, offering his book as a contribution to a general series on "Great Writers of the World" (Melville thus joining a group in limbo which already includes Horace, Boccaccio, and Saint Paul), is occupied with a general narrative of Melville's life and writings as seen from the vantage-point of a soft-spoken catholicism (small c, on the whole). Richard Chase, finally, eschews artistic creation and biographical detail in order to spell out the vast and intricate myth of "world-historical tragedy" which he has found in the works. The "revelation" of this myth is presented in psychological-political terms, and the author comes down pretty hard on the clear and present danger confronting America if it does not adopt the program (anticipated, it seems, by Melville) of a rather murky somewhat called "the new liberalism."

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About *The Trying-Out of Moby-Dick*, although it is certainly the most unequivocally satisfactory in its way of the three, I have least to say. I should think that anyone interested in *Moby-Dick* would want to own it; and if your feeling about the novel is anything like mine, you will want to bind this study together with its subject. (I understand, by the way, that this is not literally necessary, since Mr. Vincent will use most of his material to footnote his own forthcoming edition of *Moby-Dick*.) *The Trying-Out* is always fascinating and frequently exciting. The "real life" of the white whale's prototype, Mocha Dick, provides a typically fabulous chapter, culminating in Mr. Vincent's toting up of the score: fourteen stove small boats, nineteen planted harpoons absorbed in his blubber, the death of thirty men; the sinking of a lumber ship, a French merchantman, and an Australian trader; and three stove whaleboats. Mr. Vincent then, as he does in all instances, follows the transformation of the actual into the symbolic and glances a little way along the broadening road of symbolic suggestion. This is the work of a self-styled "literary geneticist" who has definitely performed a service (as the frequently misapplied saying goes), and who has nearly written a book of independent value. That it cannot entirely stand alone is due partly to the limited objective; partly to a style which though amiable, mellow, and never intrusive descends occasionally into classroom chattiness, whereas precision—though not rigidity—is imperative in dealing with Melville; and finally to Mr. Vincent's decision not to take a few steps further back into the recesses of Melville's mind and reading or further forward to the shape and direction of the finished product.

The general intellectual position of Geoffrey Stone, so far as his critical biography reveals it, is one with which I am to a great degree sympathetic; consequently, I am glad to see it focus on Melville; but when it does, it undeniably throws an odd light upon him and casts a rather weird shadow. It suggests a Melville not unlike the hero of W. H. Auden's poem, "Herman Melville"; a poem which, like the position supporting it, is too rounded, tidy, and coherent to be entirely faithful to the author of *Pierre* and "The Tartarus of Maids." Mr. Stone's position is the classical one; in its main outlines it is the one shared by Chesterton and Eliot, by C. S. Lewis and the late Archbishop Temple. Mr. Stone, like these men, believes in explanations drived from telos rather than from genesis; in God as the first principle of being and the final object of love; in man as specifically distinguished by virtue of his reason from the other animals; in original sin and the possibility of (as well as the need for) redemption; in transcendent light and meaning, rather than darkness and obscurity, at the heart of the universe. Mr. Stone also holds the Reformation to have been a fatal blunder and Romanticism a consequent calamity. In the framework of a set of convictions of this sort, Melville appears as an American romantic who carried Calvinism's dark and submissive irrationalism forward into the desperate antitheses of satanic voluntarism. The noble rebel, according

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to Mr. Stone, has adopted the hopeless and intrinsically contradictory and so self-destructive stand of the creature who resents the creation; and Melville's heroes, from Taji and Ahab to Pierre and Bartleby, are, like their author, intent upon the Narcissistic enterprise of self-drowning. (Mr. Stone thus comes by way of theology to the interpretation arrived at by Dr. Murray, in his valuable psychopathological analysis of *Pierre*.) Mr. Stone himself is less concerned with arguing a thesis than with telling the story of Melville's life and giving a brief account of his main literary achievements; nonetheless, the framework allows of some good things as well as some oddities. Among the former are the description of Babbalanja in *Mardi* as "a Unitarian with painful doubts"; the exposure of the degree of cloudiness enfolding the constant allusion to the heart and standing for the heart (though the derivation of the term from Edwardean theology is not mentioned); some simple and sensible remarks about the romantic fascination with darkness, and the distinction between it and the Oriental's expectation, untroubled by hope, of Nirvana; a perceptive review of the friendship between Melville and Hawthorne ("the lonely man is nearly always the proud one who looks at others to see his own face"; like Ugolino, one might add, and Coriolanus); and a refreshing treatment of the sexual problem in Melville. But the latter passage (it is an extended footnote in Chapter X) illustrates also the limitations of the book, for Mr. Stone turns a rather hard surface towards Melville and concludes his analysis of so complex a question with an almost inaudible formulation of this element in the creed ("The same longing . . . could only have been satisfied in God"). Mr. Stone admires Melville (the word "genius" is perhaps overused), but he keeps a fastidious distance away from him; and this produces an air throughout in general and particular matters, of smooth and sustained distortion. The terms of discussion are inevitably selective as well as prejudicial; and Mr. Stone even falls into the unrewarding practice of lecturing Melville for not having been wiser or other than he was. It may be that the position from which Mr. Stone writes can never engage its opposite more closely; it may be that we must content ourselves with the recurring spectacle of classic and romantic prowling around each other, fascinated and uncomprehending.

Richard Chase's *Herman Melville* is the one of these three books which gives the most promise of being the kind of work Mr. Hyman and others of us would like to see: for while the geneticist and the traditionalist are helpful and desirable in their way (Melville, like Shakespeare, should be explored from all valid angles), what we do want is a Melville related to the pattern, if any, of "the American experience," taken as a local fresh translation of human experience generally; and this Mr. Chase proposes to show us. One records with genuine regret that he has not finally done so. You have to swim through 208 pages of some of the most curious critical prose ever set down before discovering the motivating principle of this book; it occurs at the end of an analysis

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of *The Confidence-Man:* "If the new liberalism of the 1940's—of which in political theory Mr. Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., is the most brilliant spokesman —is to merit its assertion of superiority over the bankrupt liberalism of the thirties, it must establish itself in the best tradition of the American past." Mr. Chase's Melville is the emblem of that best tradition, and the thin red line between Melville and the last election is his major theme; but while faithful readers of *The Nation* and the Harvard *Crimson* may have anticipated much of the substance of the theme, the key term, "liberalism," shifts irresponsibly from a recognizable political reference to elusive metaphor, thence to incantation, and finally to plain non-sense.

Unlike Professor Schlesinger, Mr. Chase works on the anagogic level, drawing out of the Melville corpus an image of American and indeed of world tragedy; so that the destruction of the *Pequod* in *Moby-Dick* becomes a "symbolic smash-up of the American world"; and "*Pierre* describes the death of society." Particular elements in the novels and stories, scrutinized for their anagogic significance, appear as political and social potentials: either possible false modes of organizing society (the *Bachelor* is America seeking an archaic Utopia, the *Jeroboam* is America seeking a futurist utopia, the *Pequod* is "an anarchy . . . contrived by American technical skill") or possible good and evil brands of political leadership. Mr. Chase believes, rightly no doubt, that false leadership has characterized and betrayed the American scene, and he finds Melville's central figure, reflected variously in Ahab, Claggart, and the Confidence-Man, to be an archetypal "false Prometheus," contrasted with a nobler figure who flickers in and out of the pages and is most fully suggested in the six-inch epitaph of Bulkington. Finally, the pervasive dialectic of the stories is manifested in a series of paired terms or images: Light-Dark, Space-Time, Mountain-Valley, Tower-Cave, Phallus-Castration, etc. Mr. Chase's idea, as I imperfectly understand it, is that the valid hero must undergo the withdrawal (or descent into hell) implicated in the second set of images, in order to accomplish the mission of return (or ascent of Mt. Purgatory) symbolized by the first set; and that nothing less than this cyclic rhythm will suffice. This aspect of Mr. Chase's story would be, to untangle it with the continuing aid of a Dantesque vocabulary, the personal and ethical level as it reverberates constantly onto the public and political.

Now this is in many respects an extraordinarily fruitful conception; fundamentally, I should think, it is the right conception, proposing as it does to see in Melville a microcosm of the "American dream" as that dream has deepened into nightmare. As he sets about his task, very little escapes Mr. Chase. He has included (in an extension of Constance Rourke's study) an excellent and detailed account of frontier humor, character portrayal, styles in writing and oratory and love of spectacle: all caught up, as he persuasively suggests, in *Moby-Dick.* He has a sharp eye for such illuminating details as the fact that,

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when Pierre, Isabel, and Delly go to New York they live in a building which had once been a church; and after making much of the first and last name of Lucy Tartan, he observes that the shapely head of the Handsome Sailor (in *Billy Budd*) is set off by "a Scotch Highland bonnet with a tartan band." The book is packed with such perceptions; one of the best things about it is the convincing demonstration of a recurrence of symbol not only within particular stories but over a whole lifetime of writing.

But although Mr. Chase knows a very great deal, he does not know it in any order. The matter he deals with is phenomenally Protean; and if Mr. Chase has not performed the post-Kantian feat of thinking order into it all, I suspect it is because he has no order to think. I can after a little grasp the meaning of, but I cannot see the reason for, such remarks as: "(Bulkington) is the stuff and energy of personality in the act of setting forth toward fulfillment"; "Pierre . . . represents the earth in space"; "(Lucy) is the medium, the measurement, the future possibility of earth in its celestial transit." Sentences of this kind, though they are less stupefying in context, indicate one phase of Mr. Chase's difficulty, a phase which Wallace Fowlie has mentioned somewhere as *the* difficulty of the modern writer: the literal level is lopped off and forgotten, and the symbol itself becomes the experience. The strength of Dante's anagogic meaning, with its theological myth of universal history, rested upon the solid underpinning of literal experience and actual fact. Of all modern writers, Melville has probably managed most successfully (though by no means steadily) to retain such indispensable ballast; and Mr. Chase's secular myth of universal history becomes increasingly cloudy as he throws it away. But the respect for fact is no more important than a structure by means of which the facts can yield their meaning. Mr. Chase could use a set of principles as orderly, for example, as Mr. Stone's, for though the substance of Mr. Stone's catholicism is distorting, it provides a formal structure generally solider than Mr. Chase's rainbows. There ought to be a distinction and thus a relation between sex, psychology, history, poetics, political theory, and philosophy: in Mr. Chase's book each can become another with bewildering speed.

I am afraid, however, that my remarks will only confirm Mr. Chase's suspicion, if he is listening, that I am among the unredeemable. For what I take to be mere wooliness is apparently part of Mr. Chase's specific program for moral and political action. "The true hero," he writes, "commits himself to the rhythms of life. . . . The false hero . . . commits himself, not to the tensions and harmonies within extremes, but to the extremes themselves. The false hero, in other words, is false because he tries to derive consciousness and morality from absolute values." Of course no one who holds to "absolute values" would ever use such a phrase. But apart from that, and apart from a personal distaste for such occasional ill-mannered allusions as the one to "the peddler of spiritual-

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ism, hybrid corn, persecuted Christliness, little people-ism (sic), and short cuts to international felicity," I am concerned here rather with the extent to which such glittering confusion vitiates the most distinguished attempt so far to project the essential Melville. Mr. Chase's dialectic is, after all, only double-talk. A staunch and no doubt an earnest heart is beating at the vital center, but surely it beats a little wildly.

But having said so much, one is impelled to add that Mr. Chase alone of the most recent writers on Melville has attempted to bring to bear on his subject the complex experience of the past century, and to use the example of Melville to interpret that experience for us. Here is a Melville who is trying at least to speak to our condition: and we are all the more unhappy that it is so hard to make out what he is saying. It is a familiar lack of communication, and it is due as always to a lack of community. For Mr. Chase illustrates again the danger of sovereignty: in this case, the sovereignty of the present decade, and of the currently fashionable sciences. If, as a writer, he had absorbed more of the entire tradition: and if, as a critic of American literature, he had absorbed more of what little is valid in scholarship and criticism: he might have written the book we have been waiting for. As it is, we must continue to bide our time: remembering that it is not the only time and it is not really ours; that a lot of time has flowed away into it, providing us with much that we must neither proudly neglect nor ignorantly imitate.

Limits of the Intrinsic

WILLIAM TROY

THEORY OF LITERATURE, by *René Wellek* and *Austin Warren*. Harcourt, Brace. $4.50.

THIS IS A BOOK for which there has long been an urgent need if only as a necessary job of fumigation, written by two scholar-critics eminently qualified. Broad in scope, too broad for strategic purposes, it is a thoroughgoing examination into the state of modern literary criticism and of the teaching of literature in our colleges and universities. In method it is at once historical, theoretical, and analytical (if any true distinction can be made between these last two terms); it is actually a *history* of the theory of literature through the age, with a prescription at the end for its correction and refinement in our times. For these and other reasons it is an unusually difficult book to read, as it must have been to write, making great demands on our patience with all the foolishness that has accumulated around its subject.

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For example, the main structure of its argument (after a preliminary rather superfluous and too academic résumé of basic "Definitions and Distinctions") is based on a sharp differentiation between two approaches to literature—the "extrinsic" and the "intrinsic." By their first term the authors seem to mean very much what Richards, Burke, and Ransom call the "reductive." In the section devoted to it they describe and evaluate all of its major forms—the biographical, the psychological, the socio-economic, and the ideological. Much of this is informative, but to anyone except a student too immature to have followed all the controversies that have arisen out of these separate modes of anaesthetizing the literary organism in recent decades the critical objections raised against them become rather tiresome. The operations performed on the Freudian or Marxist schools especially seem like mere floggings of dead horses. And the question arises as to whom the book is really addressed—to the neophyte in criticism or teaching or to the established practitioner in either of these fields? If to the first, it is perhaps too overburdened with scholarly reference and analytical improvisation to be easily available. (This would apply also to that genial abstraction "the general reader.") If to the professional teacher or critic, the book runs into two different kinds of risk. For someone (like this reviewer) who is already in unqualified agreement with its main position, and with most of its special judgments, it can provide only the pleasure of corroboration. But by those to whom it should be most enlightening, whose number is legion, it is likely not to be understood at all. Here we must turn to the section dealing with what the authors call the "intrinsic" approach.

This begins with the clear-cut and today largely heterodox statement of their credo: "The natural and sensible starting point for work in literary scholarship is the interpretation and analysis of the works of literature themselves." And there follow eight strenuous chapters devoted to what they believe to be the proper analysis of the literary work of art, involving among many other things consideration of such technical elements as "Euphony, Rhythm, Metre," such pervasive linguistic matters as "Style and Stylistics," such teasing problems as those of "Image, Metaphor, Symbol, Myth." These chapters are the most erudite, the most penetrating, and should be the most helpful in the book. But throughout it all one feels that Messrs. Wellek and Warren are fighting a losing battle. For anyone ungifted from birth with some susceptibility to these "intrinsic" elements—with an ear for rhythm, let us say, or the ability to respond to symbols—is unlikely to be convinced by anything that they have to say. All the talking in the world, the dagger-definitions and the ardent explanations, will not remedy what is a congenital misfortune. And it is the pathos (if not indeed the tragedy) of so many of those engaged in the teaching of literature in America at present that they have so little natural endowment or aptitude for the task. Without it we have what we have, and what the

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authors of this book know that we have, the Graduate Schools of English and the annual meetings of the MLA. This is a disheartening way to conclude a review of what is a valiant effort to improve the situation. But these tears are shaken from the wrath-bearing tree.

Amor Omnia Vincit

ANATOLE BROYARD

LOVING, by *Henry Green.* The Viking Press. $3.

HENRY GREEN'S STYLE reminds me of Theodor Reik's observation, "An analyst often makes the surprising discovery that a man is more ready to talk about a perversion than about a tender feeling he has had." This seems to be particularly true today with men who write—which is one of the reasons we have been tempted to turn to female writers in the hope of finding a sensibility intact and unashamed. Willing to report in a neutral prose any number of enormities, few of today's male writers dare, like Henry Green, to risk a rhythm, turn a phrase, or practice the art of prose. Consider, for example, the stylelessness of *The Plague,* Sartre's trilogy, or Saul Bellow's *The Victim.* All three of these writers are extraordinarily sensitive, yet their response to reality is emotionally toneless and further flattened by the weight of their extra-artistic preoccupations.

To the charge of "mannered prose" that has been made against Green, we may well ask how else indeed can one, particularly today, describe a landscape, or a girl, without resorting to language rhythms differing from those of our despairing speech? And not only how can one, but why shouldn't one? In Green's work, style is a re-creation of and a comment on experience; it is the animate tissue in the body of his novels. Suffocated with ideas, so many modern novels are cadavers, or synthetic Frankensteins rising stiffly from operating tables. Green's works are, before everything else, organic. He doesn't impose significance on life; he squeezes it out of life in a way that recalls Melville's magnificent hyperbole in the whale sperm passage. Finding human existence "cooled . . . crystallized . . . and strangely concreted into lumps," he squeezes these lumps back into fluid essence.

Ironically enough, Green's technical superiority has been interpreted as a limitation. Because his novels are so purely *fictional,* so irreducibly artistic, they are felt by today's ideology-obsessed critics to be eccentric and "unserious." His unseriousness is further revealed by the fact that none of his novels are really

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tragic. Thus, one critic called him "minor," for only a minor (the ambiguity is pleasant) could be so cheerful and so wrapped up in his art.

The tragic view does seem to have settled, like a wet blanket, on our most ambitious writers, but perhaps the explanation for this is less logical than psychological. In *The Use of Personal Documents in Psychological Science*, Gordon Allport points out that autobiographies usually dwell on conflict areas and completely skip over long periods of comparative serenity. Insofar as our serious writers may be said to write their society's autobiography, most of them are guilty of this distortion. Green is not; his novels all end on a qualified note of affirmation—less than one might have absurdly hoped, more than one is led to expect. In this sense, he is one of the most realistic of writers. Man's entelechy, if we may call it that, has been interrupted by politico-economic events to the extent that we have almost forgotten it. Green reminds us of this potentiality, which is like a pulse that pounds unnoticed in the political protagonist's heart. His novels are pastorals in the sense that they are timeless dramas of human nature whose situations go back to ontology, that first and basic ology, now practically obsolete. Almost alone in the front ranks of literature, Green seems to be saying, "But look, life *is* lived and livable after all. We strive, seek out each other, our suicide rate is low; the thing must have its compensations." Loving is undoubtedly the foremost of these compensations. Suggesting this, the novel *Loving* opens on a dying man murmuring his love's name, and closes on a man just beginning to live murmuring his.

Loving is set in an Irish castle lived in by British aristocrats and staffed by British servants. The time is the second World War, a war which here represents the conflict of life—against which the castle is a refuge—as well as the international conflict that it also was. On one of its levels of meaning—the most obvious one—the novel describes the feudal character of the relationship between the servants and their masters. Green summarizes this relationship in succinct symbol-situations. For example, Mrs. Tennant, the mistress of Kinalty Castle, calls all footmen Arthur, because her first footman was called Arthur; and when a guest's pony evacuates in front of the door, the gatekeeper catches the manure in his hands to protect the driveway he has just raked. But perhaps the most significant comment is the maid Edith's attitude toward her discovery of her lady Mrs. Jack in bed with her lover Dermot. She is extremely possessive about the incident, telling it over and over to the other servants, proudly reiterating that it was she who came upon them, actually weeping bitterly when the butler Raunce disparages the incident. She feels her witnessing them to be a precious experience, as though she were forever condemned to look on in admiration and terror at the spectacle of the rich's pleasure. Her emancipation comes when she finds a life of her own in her love for Raunce; then she too dismisses the experience as the irrelevancy that it is.

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Loving moves in dramatically objectified statements which are equally accurate and successful on both the anecdotal and metaphorical levels. Between the two levels these statements generate an expressive irony of the kind found in the best modern poetry. The huge, empty castle perfectly symbolizes the wasteful impracticability and gothic impressiveness of an aristocratic hierarchy. In the same key are the two hundred peacocks whose beauty is their only purpose, and the lost sapphire ring which throws all the servants' lives into confusion. The unreality of this way of life is brilliantly exposed in an incomparable passage in which the old governess tells with closed eyes an absurdly euphemistic story about doves while her young aristocratic wards watch the doves copulating in their cote, smearing their surroundings with droppings, and pushing their young off the ledge to death on earth below. In another superb passage, the butler Charley Raunce stumbles upon Mrs. Jack's infidelity with Captain Dermot Davenport of Clancarty Bogs. Prefiguring Edith's subsequent discovery, this incident is filled with Green's characteristic complex puns and shifting levels of meaning: Raunce is staring at a map in the study. The map is provided with a pointer geared to a weathervane on the roof, to show which way the wind is blowing. As Raunce appraises the map with an eye to overcharging for a new spring, the pointer is fixed unwaveringly on Clancarty. The map being archaic, places are designated by pictures, and, as Clancarty was once a home of kings, Captain Davenport's place is represented by "two nude figures recumbent in gold crowns." While Raunce stares, Mrs. Jack comes in. Seeing him so intent, she follows his gaze and finds the pointer exactly on the two nude figures. "What is it?" she asks furiously, and Raunce answers innocently, "The thing seems to have got stuck," and adds, to make it worse, "I'm sure the wind is not in that quarter." With that, Mrs. Jack frantically attempts to wrench the accusing arrow away from her guilt, and it breaks off in her hand.

Earlier in the book the Captain's affair with Mrs. Jack has been again foreshadowed, in an almost Rabelaisian fashion, by a word play on Charley's innocent observation that the Captain "seeks after treasure in a bog." This use of accident and interlocking incidents is peculiarly characteristic of Green, and is the best clue, perhaps, to his vision of life, which is very close to Wallace Stevens' "revolution of things colliding." For Green, the human situation is haunted with hidden significance. In it, he shows life evolving not only out of planning and sustained effort, but also out of a magical transautomancy, an ancient, instinctive technique of divination through the interpretation of accident or random occurrence. As proof of his view, he demonstrates that man's most effective instrument for securing what he wants—speech—is irremediably imperfect. Although he has probably the finest ear of any living novelist, his characters' speech very often reveals them to be lost and wandering

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among ambiguities, seizing the accidental rather than the intended meanings of words. They all seem to be talking about different things in the same words, suggesting that our situations are all homonymic, identical but differently defined in our subjective apprehensions. This difference is sub- or supra-linguistic, too fundamental or sublime for articulation, and only works itself out because the process is natural and pre-ordained in man's make-up. At a time when most novelists are preoccupied with man's aggressive attempts to seize his destiny by the force of his will and the exercise of his intelligence, Green reminds us of what is given, of the primal conditions of humanness. His comedies of errors, everyone confused with each other, remind us of one critic's image of mankind as a huge, struggling network with uncut umbilicuses, or accidental ties. At times hopelessly isolate, we are intermittently united in accident, like a crowd assembled at an unwonted spectacle or catastrophe. This is beautifully portrayed in *Caught,* where everyone is united and identified in the light of the German incendiaries dropped on London. And if Green's conception needs any further documentation, what else indeed is our present-day laissez-faire but the life of accident, a mode of life which has, so far, excelled all others in satisfying the greatest number.

In emphasizing accident, Green is not pleading for escapism, a return to ignorance, or chaos to come again; rather is he urging us not to overlook the pastoral elements in our concern for the political. He has put man back into his habitat, which is essentially ontological, as has already been pointed out. In this habitat, he is startlingly real again. Where so many other symbolist writers (Green *is* a symbolist) have metamorphosed the common man into typological abstractions, Green has kept him amazingly concrete and individual. He is unsurpassed in recreating the rhetoric of the ordinary man, who turns out to be immensely interesting in his own right and filled with a great gusto for life. In more than one important sense, Charley Raunce is as much a man as Stephen Dedalus, and it would be snobbery to deny it.

In contemporary fiction, ideas and situations too often substitute their own existence for the mode of existence of a work of art. Green has avoided this topical pre-eminence through the exercise of a consummate craft. Summarizing that craft is as difficult as it is tempting. To say that fiction respires again in its rhythms and embodied images is hardly enough. Perhaps its quality is more clearly evoked in Heidegger's conception of communication as "a struggling love with other persons."

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Tradition and Mr. Leavis' Talent

VERNON YOUNG

THE GREAT TRADITION, by *F. R. Leavis*. George W. Stewart. New York. $4.50.

MR. F. R. LEAVIS' good humor, grace of expression, and tact in operation are the inseparable virtues of critical good breeding. In this volume, a group of essays on key novelists in English, they appear to be at odds with a lip service to more radical considerations which Mr. Leavis never closely engages. The wideness of his claims is unrelated to the displayed integrity of his interests. The quotation from D. H. Lawrence standing at the entry to his discourse to stress the religious fervor of the writer's approach to his art is not, in fact, appropriate to Mr. Leavis' critical bias. Actually he is concerned with the less vatic properties of literary success; the mainspring of his critical apparatus is his deft handling, through the comparative, analytical method and within certain limits of social interest, of the problem of disciplined form. For this reason, the most solid chapters of his book are those in which he scrutinizes the development and intention of George Eliot and Henry James, using *Daniel Deronda* as a fulcrum.

But his prefatory declarations have a misleading, sub-conventional emphasis: the major novelists (those in his Great Tradition) are distinguished by "a vital capacity for experience, a kind of reverent openness before life, and a marked moral intensity."

> . . . [they] count in the same way as the major poets in the sense that they not only change the possibilities of the art for practitioners and readers, but that they are significant in terms of the human awareness they promote; awareness of the possibilities of life.

These are handsome, guiding aphorisms but like other liberal generalizations of the kind—Art aims at proper pleasure—Poetry is a criticism of life—they are too liable to deviating applications. They serve Leavis, himself, very little in his exhibited practical criticism. Consider his subsequent gallery. "Jane Austen, George Eliot, Henry James, Conrad, and D. H. Lawrence: the great tradition of the English novel is *there*."[1] Surely there is a very qualified sense in which it can be said that any of these, except Lawrence, had "a vital capacity for experience, a kind of reverent openness before life." We grant that they had a vital capacity for the segment of experience they chose to express but this is another matter, one which Leavis finds necessary to recognize, particularly when dealing

[1]Since he discusses Jane Austen and D. H. Lawrence only tangentially, he leaves us with a tradition epitomized by Eliot, James, and Conrad, with Dickens, not definitively listed in the preliminary rationale, popping into the argument like King Charles's head.

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with Eliot and James. And his most curious habit is that of continually making oracular statements which he is consequently forced to delimit in the interest of critical justice, giving with one hand while taking away with the other. Accordingly, of Eliot, James and Conrad he asserts, to my surprise, that "of the three, James seems . . . to give decidedly most cause for dissatisfaction and qualification." Yet he considers *The Portrait of a Lady* a "great" book and gives us as tight a one-sentence encomium of James-in-general as we have had: "His registration of sophisticated human consciousness is one of the classical creative achievements: it *added* something as only genius can." Similarly, *Nostromo* is one of the great novels of the language while at the same time its "reverberation . . . has something hollow about it"; although it is still, with *The Secret Agent*, "one of the two unquestionable classics of the first order that [Conrad] added to the English novel." The compliment becomes even more strained when Conrad is summarized as "among the very greatest novelists in the language—or any language."

I am haggling over terminology because I think it is the basic issue in critical verdict. Mr. Leavis' recklessness with superlatives is detrimental to the effect of precision he creates on other occasions when he is anatomizing the work in itself. How can one safely use the words "great" and "masterpiece" in connection with Austen, Eliot, and Conrad and have any more extreme modifier left with which to pay tribute to, let us say, Dostoievsky? If a work of art is subject to such drastic reservations as Leavis (except in his grave misjudgment of *Hard Times*) is fair enough to employ, then it cannot, *ipso facto*, be a masterpiece which, if this word means anything at all today, certainly denotes a degree of perfection not open to debate.

As I have said, it is in his analyses of particular novels that Leavis' talent for critical specificity is, for the most part, supremely demonstrated. Especially does he indulge profitable re-examination of George Eliot: his seriously intensive study of her late fiction, the fiction of ideas—*Felix Holt, Middlemarch, Daniel Deronda*—should restore to the opinions on that remarkable woman an adult appreciation of her powers which has long been withheld in favor of easy deprecation at the expense of her pastoral novels. While recognizing the silly, hortative digressions and the laborious flights into unsublimated sexual hostility that so frequently defused George Eliot's literary form, Leavis defends, with copious illustration, her solid gifts of characterization and intellectual strategy. He is impressed, in the works he chooses for extended explication, by the subtleties most critics have been too impatient to discover, "the inner movement of impulse, the play of motive that issues in speech and act and underlies formed thought and conscious will" and "co-operating with these, a kind of psychological notation . . . one of the distinctive characteristics of her mature style."

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Leavis adduces the special felicities of critical irony and perceptive sympathy with which the later novels abound, Eliot's wide and evidently intimate knowledge of English social classes and occupations, her acute and double-edged *rapport* with the predicament of a Mrs. Transome, a Casaubon, a Mr. Bulstrode, a Lydgate, a Mr. Gascoigne, a Herr Klesmer. The negligible matter of her art derives, in Leavis' opinion, from lapses in self-knowledge, from a feminine and Victorian inability to free her evaluations and presentments from "the day-dream self-indulgence," a weakness prominent in her successive self-identification with Maggie Tulliver, Romola, and Dorothea Brooke, and an attendant setting up of Hetty Sorrel and Rosamond Vincy as cautionary pledges of the destructively beautiful. In *Daniel Deronda,* Leavis sees recapitulation of this failing in the title character, a "woman's creation" of an irresponsibly idealized hero. But there is a good and a bad part of *Daniel Deronda,* Leavis argues, and he favors ruthless excision of the bad, Deronda part and salvage of the good, Gwendolen Harleth part. He maintains, with comparison galore, that James's *Portrait of a Lady* was developed from the Gwendolen Harleth story. Gilbert Osmond is Grandcourt again; Isabel Archer is Gwendolen, "seen by a man." Moreover, George Eliot achieves a much more complete representation of her subject than James of his, for she "sees with a judging vision that relates everything to her profoundest moral experience: her full living sense of value is engaged, and sensitively responsive." James's too committed admiration of Isabel leads to an evasiveness resulting in inconsistency "that partly empties the theme of *The Portrait of a Lady* of moral substance." Furthermore, James's art, in presenting the country-house world "seems to leave out all such perceptions as evoke the tones and facial expressions with which we register the astringent and the unpalatable." It is, on the whole, "less real," which is to say less concrete. I recommend Mr. Leavis' chapter on this contrast as a classic exercise in comparative criticism.

As for James himself, Leavis is frankly devoted to the early and middle years of his career. Although his essay on this subject was written before the recent and almost universal rehabilitation of the Final Period (but it postdates Percy Lubbock's exposition), his republication of it guarantees the permanence of his opinion, and it must be confessed that he enforces this opinion with firm principle and illustration. In most particulars he agrees with the disclaimer of Yvor Winters. On the relationship of *The Portrait* to "Gwendolen Harleth," he sees, in the James version, "already a certain disproportion between an intensity of art that has at the same time an effect of moral intensity and the actual substance of human interest provided." This disproportion, accompanied by "hypertrophy of technique," increases in the Final Period. The James masterpieces are *The Bostonians, The Europeans, Washington Square* and, not without reservations, *The Portrait of a Lady* and *What Maisie Knew.* Leavis institutes

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instructive comparison among the 'American theme' novels. With Newman, Isabel Archer, Pandora Day, and Daisy Miller in mind, he insists that

> the attempt to isolate and exalt the distinctively and uniquely American is—on the showing of the consequences in James's art—misconceived. . . . The "Americanism" results ultimately in a feebleness and in a perversity of valuation we may figure by Milly Theale of *The Wings of the Dove*. An American heiress, merely because she is an American heiress, is a Princess, and such a Princess as, just for being one, is to be conceived as a supreme moral value: that is what it amounts to.

It seems to me that all this section of Leavis' argument is extremely well taken and exemplified. It is where he depreciates the Final James that the cardinal limitation of his critical temperament shows up. He quotes approvingly Mrs. Wharton's anecdote in which James had confessed his ignorance of the fact that in *The Golden Bowl* he had stripped his characters of all "human fringes." Leavis' apparent inference is that the latest novels can be construed as accidents, complex compositions whose much-admired subtleties and symbolisms are by-products of "incapacity." The view is not unfamiliar and I cannot redress it within the limits of these paragraphs. However, without being a fanatic of the Final Period myself, I think I may with fairness suggest that the Leavis criticism, essentially the line taken by all anti-Late-James exponents, is posited on the criterion of social specificity, the mainstream virtue of the novel as created before James. To support the value of the *fin-de-siècle* James, one has to affirm that, whether or not by accident, he fulfilled, in such novels as *The Golden Bowl*, an incredibly figurative kind of work which need not, if definition of form is to be so rigorous, be called novelistic at all.

I remember an English professor who, in the face of obstinate undergraduate inquiries as to whether *Samson Agonistes* was a drama, a poem, a dramatic poem, or a poetic drama, stated with bland finality that brooked no dispute, "It's simply a work called *Samson Agonistes*." This abandonment of classification, if encouraged, might be troublesome to the patrons of the Dewey Decimal System (and I realize the dangerous consolation it could afford the brethren of Thomas Wolfe), but there are mysterious qualities in art that persist in discounting our formulae. If *The Golden Bowl* or *The Jolly Corner* are to be held deficient by Tolstoyan standards of fictional reality—for this is what Leavis' stricture comes to—might we not follow my professor's lead until a new term is officially accepted? For, if James didn't know what he was doing, in terms of his genre, in his latest works, he none the less did something very remarkable. The accidents of genius are substantiated by the very circumstance of their emergence from *genius*. The brush-strokes of the ailing Titian are explained as unintended wonders issuing from the hand of a master going blind. Yet isn't it the point that *any* painter going blind would not produce Titian's art and

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that no writer, deliberately emasculating himself and removing the contingent factors from his work in favor of the isolated moral proposition, would be likely to duplicate the curious poetic tone and psychological chiaroscuro of the Final James?

At heart, Leavis' criticism is stubbornly Apollonian (to borrow a term made useful by Spengler and Ruth Benedict alike). It shines in allegiance to common sense and demonstrable social discriminations; it shudders when the psychological is importunately courted. Leavis rarely adverts to Continental literature in his discussions and his sole reference to Proust is an alarmingly priggish one (strictly Cambridge?), to the effect that he would sooner re-read *Clarissa* than *A la recherche du temps perdu*. At such moments (he intends no joke, that is clear) we are given leave to doubt his sagacity when un-domestic recognitions are thrust upon him. His failure fully to appreciate the alien tread is evinced by his estimate of Conrad. Not that he isn't able to render Conrad's talent with due force; his redaction of theme and structure in *The Secret Agent* is a fine piece of work and it is good to see belated attention paid to *The Shadow Line* and to have someone emphasize the mark of Dickens on Conrad and of Conrad (possibly) on Koestler. (And *when* is someone going to recognize the adjectives in William Faulkner?) But Leavis won't acknowledge Conrad as a starting-point from which there follows a line, not so much of influence as of correlation, that subordinates the connection of Conrad with his English predecessors. Yvor

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Winters has pointed to the intervals marked by James, Dorothy Richardson, Proust and Virginia Woolf. So gloomy a consequence as Winters gathers from this heritage is not demanded of our consent to its existence, and we can safely add Conrad to this family tree, introducing cross-references that will include Melville and Kafka.

I am not playing Categories. I believe that Conrad's difference from George Eliot and Dickens is more important than his obligations to them, that the "essential Conrad" which Leavis tries hard to predicate is less in *Nostromo* than he thinks and more in *The Shadow Line* and in *The Secret Sharer* (which he doesn't mention). Leavis had a splendid opportunity here to confront *Nostromo* with *Middlemarch*. Each is concerned with a social-psychological scheme of checks and balances. (Eliot's "there is no private life which has not been determined by a wider public life" is pivotal for *Nostromo* as well.) And the faults are alike, for *Middlemarch* suffers from George Eliot's faltering objectification of Dorothea in this scheme, and Conrad, I have always felt, failed to relate Decoud and Nostromo to his scheme as clearly as he thought he had. *Middlemarch* should have been a tragedy (of frustration) instead of a tragicomedy. *Nostromo is* a tragedy (of false goals) but I think other critics have agreed that its structure is not visibly fitted to the total requirements of its subject. It is certainly difficult to see it, with Leavis, as "a taut, inclusive scheme." In any case, it represented Conrad's engagement with and farewell to the Eliot type of nineteenth-century mercantile novel. The widely representative organization was not his forte, Leavis notwithstanding. After *Nostromo*, Conrad again narrowed his scope and produced the transpersonal intensity of *The Secret Sharer* and *The Shadow Line*, distilling the themes of moral isolation from *Under Western Eyes* and *The Secret Agent*. Leavis may regret that the purer Conrad was a thinner Conrad, leading to the hermetic heroes of Proust and Kafka, but I think we reread these novels because Conrad's strength is seen now to be that of a greater tradition than Leavis confines it to. Conrad attempted, as few in English had before him, to define modern man, as well as representing men. The attempt—his try into the darkness—hedges him with a glory not surrounding such as George Eliot.

If one can be moderate in qualifying Mr. Leavis on any of these scores, because he is so reasonable in his address, so frequently discerning with his proof and so altogether princely in his style, one can still experience a jolt into asperity upon reading his "analytic note" on Dickens' *Hard Times*, in which novel he finds "concentrated significance—close and insistent relevance to a serious and truly rich theme," comparable to James's *The Europeans!* We are all familiar with the desperate seminar student at the round table who has selected some thoroughly detestable minor classic to expound in the hope that no one else will have read it in order to challenge the long-faced seriousness that he has imported

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into it. In deciding that *Hard Times* adds up to "perfection" (the absolute word again), Leavis has qualified for a seat at the round table.

He opens by confessing that the intention and nature of this novel are "pretty obvious." I should say that they are obvious to the point of boredom. *Hard Times* then, is a "moral fable." Gradgrind, Utilitarianism disinterested, is allied with Bounderby, juggernaut Individualism. Between them are Cecelia (Sissy) Jupes, the Impulsive Life (she is adopted out of a circus), Gradgrind's daughter, Louisa, married off to Bounderby, and his son who, having learned no value save that of utility, exploits his sister and ends in jail for theft. Stephen Blackpool, on the perimeter of this family circle, is an honest working-man outlawed both by the Union and the Coketown owners; the addition of the opportunist, Harthouse, and Bounderby's retainer, Mrs. Sparsit, fill out, to Leavis' eye, "the whole system of British snobbery." Now all this, far from being subtly constructed, stands there with all its nails showing throughout, and when Leavis avers that Dickens was "for once possessed by a comprehensive vision," we protest that a vision is not the same as a formula. The paying off of representations, one against the other, is nothing less than that easy Hegelianism so many nineteenth-century novelists fell heir to: thesis, antithesis and synthesis (more delicately elaborated, it is in *Middlemarch* and *Nostromo*). Leavis calls Dickens' method "ironic," is awed by the "potently symbolic role" of Sissy, quotes profusely scenes in which the symbolic intention is supposed to lurk—

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the classroom episode where the sunlight through the window heightens the lustrousness of the Jupes girl and blanches the miserable Bitzer, for example.

Criticism is useful when it draws attention to such correspondences of scene and thesis if they are not already transparent; but there can be no doubt, either in this instance or any other in the book, what Dickens is up to. Nor do other details of motivation, mood, and style mitigate the inflexibility of Dickens' outline. I simply ask the neutral reader if he believes that Sissy Jupes has any identity and function in the novel's structure commensurate with our expectations of her in the opening chapters, if Sleary's Horse-Riding can as glibly be related to the Lawrentian imperative as Leavis hopes, if Sleary himself, Childers and Cupid, are not typical and tedious fortuities of the Dickens canon and if the ending of this work is not makeshift, evasive, false, and quite uncontributive to the sense of a "profoundly poetic whole." That Dickens made anything out of a potentially critical subject which can be appreciated on a mature level of discrimination, no one has before had the effrontery to reason; Leavis has here confused adumbration with completion. Finally, having rescued, it is true, the best passages in the book, he coolly passes by the hideous lapses that challenge his most extravagant pronouncement. "The prose is that of one of the greatest masters of English, and the dialogue—very much a test in such an undertaking —is consummate, beautiful, natural in its stylization." For which proof, I serve the following puddings.

> (*Louisa to Tom*) "As you lie here alone, my dear, in the melancholy night, so you must lie somewhere one night, when even I, if I am living then, shall have left you. As I am here beside you, barefoot, unclothed, undistinguishable in darkness, so must I lie through all the night of my decay, until I am dust. In the name of that time, Tom, tell me the truth now!"
>
> (*Louisa to Gradgrind*) She dropped into a chair before him, and put her cold hand on his arm.
>
> "Father, you have trained me from my cradle?"
>
> "Yes, Louisa."
>
> "I curse the hour in which I was born to such a destiny."
>
> He looked at her in doubt and dread, vacantly repeating: "Curse the hour? Curse the hour?"
>
> "How could you give me life, and take from me all the inappreciable things that raise it from the state of conscious death? Where are the graces of my soul? Where are the sentiments of my heart? What have you done, O father, what have you done, with the garden that should have bloomed once, in this great wilderness here!" She struck herself with both her hands upon her bosom.

Mr. Leavis can do no less than follow her example.

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Comment

In our editorial Comment for the last issue, we referred to the Statement made by the Fellows in American Letters of the Library of Congress in reply to the attacks by the *Saturday Review of Literature,* and undertook to print it in this issue if the *Saturday Review* continued to ignore it and if other means for disseminating it were not found. The Statement has since been published, however, along with other supplementary material, in a pamphlet now on sale entitled *The Case Against the Saturday Review of Literature.* We recommend this pamphlet to the attention of our readers; copies can be obtained from *Poetry,* 232 East Erie Street, Chicago 11, Illinois.

The *Saturday Review* has persistently refused to open its pages to an adequate reply on behalf of the persons whom it has slandered. The letter that follows was sent on November 4, 1949. As it has failed to appear in the *Saturday Review's* correspondence columns, we are printing it here.

November 4, 1949

The Editors
The Saturday Review of Literature
New York, N. Y.

Sirs:

The literary and political values of the poetry of Ezra Pound offer wide latitudes of support and opposition, as all poetry does in one degree or another. Discussion of the Bollingen award in these terms was to be welcomed.

But the methods employed by Robert Hillyer in the recent attacks published in your pages (June 11 and 18, 1949), and supported by your several editorials, are in our opinion reprehensible, in the following terms:

Under pretense of attacking the award of the Bollingen Prize to Ezra Pound, you sanctioned and guided a prepared attack on modern poetry and criticism, impugning not only the literary reputations but the personal characters of some of its foremost writers. In this blanket attack you included persons not connected with the award in any capacity, as well as its donor. Through the technique of the smear and "guilt by association" you linked the names of T. S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, Paul Mellon, and Carl Jung, and adumbrated a Fascist conspiracy, for which you did not produce the evidence, and by implication you included in this attack not only certain of the Fellows in American Letters of the Library of Congress but also a larger group of unnamed writers who were

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participating in the "conspiracy." We submit that public decency, to say nothing of personal honor—two indispensable standards of democratic action—required you, in view of the gravity of the charges, to name specifically all the accused persons. Considering the number of printed retractions and apologies in subsequent issues of your journal, we are forced to believe that your critical examination of the validity of Robert Hillyer's allegations, before you published them, was somewhat less than disinterested, and that thus your campaign was conducted in a dangerous and unprincipled manner.

We therefore protest against the methods of your attack, which in our opinion has violated the standards of responsible literary controversy, and thus has dealt a blow to American culture.

Signed:

JAMES AGEE
NEWTON ARVIN
JOSEPH WARREN BEACH
JOSEPH D. BENNETT
JOHN BERRYMAN
DOROTHY BETHURUM
R. P. BLACKMUR
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* *Mr. John Dos Passos authorizes the publication of a separate statement*:

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Westmoreland, Virginia

October 26, 1949

Since I haven't followed the controversy over the award of the Bollingen Prize to Ezra Pound it would be hard for me to make any specific statement about it. This much I can say however: I thought that the award to a poet who, although erratic to the point of insanity, still remains one of the masters of English prosody showed great courage and a feeling for the solidarity of the republic of letters pretty unique in the world today. I can say this in spite of the fact that I have only aversion for Ezra Pound's political notions and no personal affection for his work. I sincerely hope that there will arise enough defenders of the great humane concept which in my opinion underlay the decision of the committee that made the award, to shout down its detractors.

(*Signed*) JOHN DOS PASSOS

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